

# FAMOUS RETREATS IN WARFARE



Marshal Ney Covering the Retreat From Moscow, 1812.  
From the Painting by Evon at Versailles.



Sir John Moore, Who Conducted a Masterly Retreat in the Peninsula Campaign and, Although Losing His Life, Brought His Army Safely to the Coast and the Transports.



Napoleon in the Retreat from Moscow, 1812.

BY RICHARD G. CONOVER.  
Drummer, beat me a low retreat!  
Low, so the foe may not hear your  
rolling—  
Scattered and rent, in dire defeat,  
Call in our columns from death's  
tolling.

Grimly his sticks the drummer raised,  
Over the rim they snapped from his  
bending:  
Out of his eyes the proud fire blazed,  
Gleamings of battle with wrath  
sparks blending.

"Never has roll like that," he cried,  
"Come from my drum in all of its  
beating;  
Sound it, I couldn't though I tried—  
Dead are my sticks and I'm past re-  
treating!"  
—The Drum of Fontenoy.



Xenophon, the Greek General, Who Commanded the Greeks in the Famous Retreat of the Ten Thousand.

**M**IDWAY between the awfulness of the great victory and of the great defeat comes the awfulness of the great retreat. In the wars of the world there have been few such military movements of magnitude. As a rule battles of the first grade have resulted in the annihilation or surrender of the vanquished army. And when this has not been the case the victor has been so exhausted with his efforts that he has not dared to press a close pursuit.

All of the previous wars of history have been bygone conflicts compared with the present giant's struggle in Europe. It is not surprising that the last and most stupendous of all retreats should have evolved from the military operations of the months of August and September of the fateful year 1914. The falling back of 1,000,000 soldiers in the course of a battle line 268 miles wide, until they had given ground for almost 150 miles, exceeds in wonder the figures and details of the most consummate military romance.

And what is most remarkable of all, the same million of retreaters, battling day after day for weeks until they were pushed to within 30 miles of the fortifications of their capital, turned on their pursuers when thus brought to bay and hurled them back in turn for mile after mile of the distance measuring their own retreat. Annals of warfare fail to furnish a match for this in the way of numbers engaged, length of battle line, mileage of conflict and retreat and remarkable degree of recovery and retaliation. Other famous retreats may have been attended with greater carnage, hardship and fatality, according to percentage of men engaged, but in the stupendousness of numbers and operations connected with the retirement of the French-English army there is nothing in the bygone centuries that can be placed in equal illustrative comparison.

In middle August the allies faced the Germans in great masses from near Basel, in Switzerland, to the Dutch frontier near Maastricht. Brussels was taken August 20, Charleroi August 27, Le Fer August 30. These were westward movements from the axis of the German base at about Etichback. Then began the southward squeeze toward Paris. September 1 the Germans had enveloped Rheims. By September 4 they were in the vicinity of Amiens. By September 5 they were to the west of Paris and on its same parallel of latitude. Then the retreat ended, the allies turning on the German pursuers and making them in their turn the pursued.

This great retreat lasted between 10 days and two weeks. The Kaiser's soldiers were in superior numbers and swept forward irresistibly at the rate of about 30 miles every 24 hours. During this time there never was an out-and-out battle fought—it was just a pushing of the allies southward. In this respect it was also unlike the most famous retreats of history, especially the Moscow catastrophe.

Toward the end of the retreat the allies increased in number and more and more of the German troops reached an attacking position. From a million and a half to two million men took part in the movement. The loss of life, according to reports, was much greater among the attackers than the retreaters—another exception in warfare. Until the history of the war is written after its conclusion, what the losses of each side were cannot be given for use in comparison with other great retreats of history.

Nor can the hardships and losses from fatigue be estimated to match the other great retreat tragedies. Suffering from lack of food, such as accompanied other great retreats, was no feature of this last and greatest. The orderliness of retirement was also without parallel. Figuratively the hosts of the allies backed away slowly, instead of hurrying southward in a near-panic, with a rear guard holding the van of the pursuit until a new zone of safety was reached. It was the retreat stupendous of history.

So, while the army may fall back, or retire, or change its base, or give ground, if it be not systematically fol-

lowed or harassed during such movement, then the chronicle of its shift means nothing more than the chronicle of a march. Lee's withdrawal southward after the battle of Gettysburg did not at its approach, the anxiety of a cavalry force, pell mell retreat. It was an expeditious retirement, but far from approximating the panic point at any stage.

An exhaustive search of history is not needed to pick the premier retreat of all time. Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812 stands without a parallel. Nearly 300,000 soldiers battling under the French colors died of wounds, exposure or lack of food between the months of August and December. In five months Bonaparte's hosts, numbering 553,000 men, shrank more than 50 per cent in a march approximating 1600 miles, counting advance and retreat. For every milestone passed there was a tragic tally of nearly 200 dead battlers. For every 24 hours death claimed a toll of 2400 men. Never before or since has retreat of rout exhibited such horror.

But through all the gigantic catastrophe the organization and discipline of the French army was preserved. Sometimes it seemed that there was not even a remnant of army left for preservation or discipline, but out of the mists and the darkness of the snow-entombed steppes always there came the distant roll of the drum and the faint outlines of the advancing skirmishers. Fight a while, march a mile and fight a while again was the constant programme. Not since the first soldier in the world's history donned a uniform were men recruited to die to die and to die more than these who marched to the streets of Moscow and then back again across the Niemen.

Napoleon's disastrous invasion of Russia was the outcome of the refusal of the Muscovite ruler to acknowledge the French Emperor's right to loan the continent of Europe. Bonaparte's famous Continental System was the root of it.

This system meant that all countries on the Continent must close their ports to British products and seize all British property and citizens within their borders. It all but ruined Russian commerce and was especially galling to a ruler so imperious and mighty as Alexander. Napoleon's disposition of the Duke of Oldenburg, the czar's near relative, also offended him deeply.

On June 26 and 25, 1807, a gorgeously caparisoned royal yacht anchored in the middle of the River Niemen. Napoleon and Alexander agreed upon the Peace of Tilsit. It was supposed that this settlement of the differences between the conqueror and his late adversary would lead to a lasting alliance.

Five years later to the day Napoleon crossed the same Niemen at the head of more than half a million troops to invade the realm of his former friend and ally. Alexander had opened his ports to British goods and had spoken his mind about the Duke of Oldenburg business. Alexander should be punished.

Napoleon's army of invasion, marshaled on a magnificent scale, crossed the Niemen in five columns. Contrary to the belief that prevails extensively, the great Emperor's troops were not a representative body of French soldiers. There were fighting men from Italy, Switzerland, Holland, Poland, Austria, Prussia and other of the smaller German speaking principalities. In fact, the French formed the smaller part of the huge army. Soldiers came from all over Europe to fight under the banner of Bonaparte because treaties made their countries temporary allies. Great Britain and Sweden were the only friends of Russia, and they gave only scant aid. But at that the Tsar did not need them. Generals "January" and "February," as the rigorous Russian winter was dubbed by a commander, later proved all-sufficient.

Austria's contribution to the invasion was 30,000 soldiers and Prussia's 20,000. The Austrians, under Schwarzenberg, were on the right wing and the Prussians, under York, on the left. They formed separate armies, the entire left

being under the command of the French Marshal Maconald. June 28, Wilna, the capital of Lithuania, was reached. There seventeen days were spent while a terrible storm raged throughout the entire province. The main army stormed and took Smolensk August 13. The French won the battles of Borodino and Moshaisk on September 7, after a desperate resistance.

Moscow was reached September 14, with Napoleon's main army shrank to 95,000 men. The city had been deserted by the inhabitants, the Governor, Rostophin, setting it on fire before his departure. For five days Moscow was ablaze, as a result of which more than 7000 houses and three-fourths of the habitable portions were laid in ashes. Napoleon proffered a truce to Alexander. He waited in Moscow five weeks before he concluded negotiations were impossible. And then, noting the swift signs of an unusually hard winter, with no shelter for his mighty army, he blew up the historic Kremlin and gave the command to set in motion the most woeful retreat of history.

It was October 19, 1812, when the backward march of the invaders began. From the very start the deadly Cossacks began his work. There was not one in sight in the vicinity of Moscow during the five weeks Napoleon remained there, but as soon as his columns got under way in the open country the czar's famous horsemen appeared. Sometimes only in squadrons, sometimes by thousands they swept down upon the French flanks and rear as if summoned by the wave of the conjurer's wand. Dash after dash they made, leaving a swath of dead as they galloped off again, into the snow mists of the Russian roads.

The retreat was taken up first in a southwesterly direction and afterward toward Smolensk. After the Cossacks began their harassing and had got the French considerably shaken up the Russian main army under General Kutsoff appeared in the invader's path. On October 24 a desperate contest of separate corps of the two armies took place at Jaroslaves and again at Viazma on November 3. The French repulsed both attacks and continued their retreat. But their incidental victories did not deter the swarms of Cossacks from constantly attacking Napoleon's troops.

## REMARKABLE PROPHECY MADE BY VICTOR HUGO

**O**N MARCH 1, 1871, the National Assembly of France convened at Bordeaux to ratify the preliminary articles of peace concluded with Germany. On that occasion Victor Hugo, after charging Napoleon III with the French debacle, contrasted the futures of the contending nations. As a result of her victory Germany, he declared would be sternly ruled by a Caesar of "divine right," whose scepter would be the saber, enchaining thought, muzzling the press and stifling the national conscience, while conquered France would overcome her misery under the guidance of the sovereign people, with free speech, free conscience and human rights. Amid the wildest enthusiasm he concluded with this remarkable prophecy: "Oh! The clock will strike—and we shall hear the sound—for this prodigious revenge. Thus will begin the to-

day November 6, 1812, goes down in history as a tragic point in the retreat. That day there was a heavy fall of snow, proclaiming the arrival of the terrible Russian Winter. It came weeks earlier than usual and with uncommon severity. This was the moment the fierce Cossacks had waited for. Apparently immune to the rigors of the storm, they dashed out of the darkness, hoarsely shouting their battle cry, shooting and sabring. They cut off stragglers by the hundred. In a single night of extraordinary cold 6000 men were frozen to death in the drifts and around the bivouac fires.

But onward the great Napoleon led his men toward the Nieman. Over-partial historians declare that he shared the hardships of his troops to a great degree. Once the column he commanded lost the road. Night was coming on and the snow descending heavily. By the light of a huge fire built along the road Bonaparte and his Generals scanned their maps again. The column fled past huzzars even in his hunger and peril.

"Had we not better halt them before they go further out of their way?" Napoleon was asked.

"Let them march, even though it be to the equator," answered Bonaparte grimly, "they will die of cold in 15 minutes if you stop them."

Suddenly the great leader called on a general of his engineers for a compass. Holding it close to the fire light he watched the needle swing to the north. The army had been marching due east, or back toward Moscow again!

"Fear up your maps and execute your guides," said the Emperor contemptuously. "In this little matter you have the only solution of distance."

There were continuous engagements with the Russians, those at Kraonoy and Horissoff being especially fierce. At the former place the Russians barred the way with 60,000 men under the indefatigable Kutsoff. Napoleon's personal exertions alone saved his army from utter destruction. Ney, who com-

manded the rear guard, had not yet come up, and the French were overwhelmed. This great retreat had engaged the Russians in a furious battle on the Lesmana, and managing to elude their pursuit, crossed the Dnieper on the ice and rejoined Bonaparte at Orza, with only the wreck of his splendid corps.

On November 26 the retreating invaders reached the River Beresina, where the Russians gathered in force to prevent a crossing. Napoleon succeeded in laying two bridges across the stream and in transporting the greater part of his troops to the opposite bank. But it was at frightful cost. At one point Marshals Ney and Oudinot, with only 8500 men, had to pry their way through 25,000 Russians to reach the shore.

Victor's corps covered the point of passage and again and again was driven back under the artillery and the other was blown up by Victor's order. The Russian artillery kept up a fatal fire upon the struggling masses of the French. Thousands perished in the Beresina and thousands more were captured.

As soon as the remnants of this army of invasion had made the passage of this disputed stream Napoleon left the command to Marshal Murat and hurried to Paris to disprove reports of his death and crush the plotters who aimed to turn the government over to the representatives of Great Britain and her allies. Murat led the broken invaders to the Niemen, still pursued by Cossacks, and a crossing was made December 13, or just about six months from the date the proud invaders had passed over the river marching on Moscow. Barely 125,000 soldiers left Russian territory. The remainder of the 553,000 troops had died in battle, had perished from cold, hunger or fatigue, or had been captured.

For 23 centuries the world has admired the celebrated retreat of the Ten Thousand. While this remarkable march out of danger has much to rivet the attention and evoke praise, it cannot be compared with the retreat of Moscow in the way of suffering and the extent of its fatalities. Rather is it a brilliant feat in which hardship was overcome, much more than death.

The Ten Thousand were Greek mercenaries. They had been hired by Cyrus, the younger son of the great Persian King Darius, who was a satrap of Phrygia, Lydia and Cappadocia. They were mustered into service on the pretext of engaging in an expedition against the bandits of Plidia, and their march began from Sardis in the Spring of B. C. 401. In reality, however, Cyrus designed the expedition as a rebellion against his elder brother, Artaxerxes II, who had succeeded to the throne. He crossed the Euphrates at Thapsacus, and then the Greeks learned for the first time what they were to fight for. It was too late to turn back, so they marched to the plain of Cunaxa, 57 miles from Babylon, and faced the royal army under Artaxerxes.

The Greeks were winning the battle for Cyrus when he penetrated to his brother's tent and was cut down by the King's guard. His death put an end to the conflict and the campaign. The Persians of the dead rebel's army made their peace with Artaxerxes, leaving the Greeks to shift for themselves. Tissaphernes, the successor to the satrapy of Cyrus, detained them in the vicinity for a month on pretense of treating with them.

Finally he enticed them as far as the upper waters of the Tigris, where he entrapped their officers and sent them to death. Then it was that Xenophon, who had accompanied the army of Cyrus, but not as a soldier, assembled the remaining Greek leaders at midnight, pointed out the necessity of instant action, and urged them to select new officers and try to regain their own land, over 1000 miles away. The Greeks chose five Generals, one of them Xenophon, and at sunrise the next morning began their retreat.

Entirely ignorant of the country they must traverse, and without guides, the Ten Thousand set out in the winter season. Their route of march lay across the desolate territory of Armenia, with nothing to be obtained that would contribute to their shelter and only a scanty opportunity for subsistence. Large numbers succumbed to the cold. Tissaphernes with his Persian army constantly pursued and harassed them. Their constant necessity was the division of their force for relief as van and rearwards, so that the rear attacks of the pursuing Persians might be adequately met and repelled.

The discipline and valor of the retreating Greeks were of such a high grade that the historian relates that never once were they compelled to halt their march.

This famous retreat is declared to have occupied 215 days. Decimated and almost on the point of giving up hope of escaping the Persians or of

ever seeing their homes again, the little army came to a mountain to the south of Trebizond, and beheld the wide expanse of the Euxine or Black Sea. The troops in advance burst into a great cry of "The sea! The sea!" and the despairing thousands coming on took it up and passed it down the line. Their hardships were not all over, but they knew where they were and henceforward marched for a certainty toward distant Greece.

One of the great retreats of history was a consequence of the naval battle of Salamis, September 20, B. C. 480. The Greeks had defeated the Persians under Xerxes, who had invaded Greece with upward of a million soldiers—some accounts have it two millions.

As soon as the Greek sea victory was assured Xerxes began his march back to Persia. The remnants of the Persian fleet were ordered to the Hellespont to guard the wharves. Boatswain Themistocles in forced march, Xerxes left Mardonius with a command to oppose the Greek pursuit and hurried toward the sea. His stores were exhausted and vast numbers of his troops died from famine and fatigue on the way. At the Hellespont he found his bridges destroyed by a storm, so that his mighty army was obliged to cross the Strait in ships. Food was obtained at Abydos, but the hungry troops ate so ravenously that large numbers died from gorging. Even on the other side of the Hellespont the soldiers of Xerxes were hurriedly burned as though the Greeks were on their heels. At last, eight months after the Persian King had set out from Lydia, he entered the capital of that province again with barely a third of his magnificent host.

A remarkable retreat that has been but meagerly chronicled is that of Marshal Grouchy after the battle of Waterloo. He was at Limalo, eight miles from Mont St. Jean, when he heard that Wellington had won the great victory. He decided to retreat to France by way of Namur, Dinant and Givet. It was necessary to make great haste in order to escape Grouchy's pursuers, the allies, and possibly Blucher. The retreat began at 11:30 on the morning of June 19, 1815, or the day after Waterloo.

Grouchy reached Namur at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and his army of 25,000 men bivouacked later at Temploux, six miles beyond Givet. Pajol formed the rearward and protected the retreat. The operation was effected without firing a shot. The next day Vandamme withdrew his troops from Namur too soon. It was necessary to attack the fortress against the attacks of the Prussians while Grouchy's main army reached Dinant. The following day, June 21, the French frontier was reached, and by evening the entire army was collected in safety under the guns of Givet. The march has been called one of the most successful retreats of modern military history. It was the more remarkable in that Grouchy did not despair and decide to surrender his 23,000 soldiers and 116 guns when he learned that his great captain had lost a battle and a throne.

The retreat of Sir John Moore, by which he lost his life, is another which he lost his life at the moment of success, has always had a praised place in history. Napoleon had entered Madrid in triumph, and Austrian troubles demanding his attention nearer home, he turned over to Marshal Soult the task of driving Moore out of the Peninsula. Moore was in the vicinity of Burgos when he heard that Soult's vastly superior force was marching against him. On January 16, 1809, Soult caught up with Moore near Corunna, at which point the English awarded their retreat. Moore's retreat was a masterpiece of strategy. He arranged his fighting line so that the retreat was never halted and finally all of his army was safely removed to the vessels.

## Specializing in Medicine.

(Philadelphia Ledger.)  
Specializing in medicine is getting upon one's nerves. Pneumonia? Consult Jones Typhoid? See no one but Smith. Mumps? Trust only Brown. Broken leg? Let none set it except Robinson. Headache? You imperil your life by taking medicine from anybody but White.  
Throat specialists, eye specialists, ear specialists, stomach specialists, nerve specialists, men specialists, women specialists, children's specialists and specialists in X-rays, diet, blood, skin and bone.  
Nevertheless, I feel that there is room for just one more specialist, to wit: The all-round doctor.  
Certain lawyers make a specialty of claims against the city. Others sue out claims against corporations. I don't mean the vulgar ambulance chasers, but real, high-class attorneys.  
And what a lot of specializing in business! Experts in a hundred different lines. One man can buy, but can't sell. Others can sell things, but couldn't buy advantageously.  
When you get to engineers, architects, painters and decorators you discover another army of specialists. Even bankers are known to do special things better than other things.

## Spirit of Loyalty.

(Washington Star.)  
"Didn't that man who sold you the machine tell you it had a 40-horsepower motor?"  
"Yes," replied Mr. Chuggins.  
"Seems kind of weak to me."  
"Well, I wasn't there when they made the calculation. You know some horses are a good deal stronger than others."