



Passage de La Beresina 26-27-28- Et 29th Novembre 1812

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The crossing of the River Beresina (in modern Belarus) in November 1812 was the final act in the tragedy that was Napoleon's disastrous invasion of Russia. Although the tattered and frozen remnants of the Grande Armee managed to get across - thanks to the bridge-building skills of their pioneers - their losses were dreadful. Cossack horsemen cut down thousands of stragglers, while thousands more perished in the frozen waters of the river. This volume is a unique and remarkable find: a beautifully hand written account of the battle by an anonymous French writer - very probably, judging by the authoritative tone, a survivor of the battle - and an English translation of the text. The account describes the four-day battle, from the approach by the Emperor's depleted army; harassed by overwhelmingly superior Russian forces; the diversionary feint by Marshal Oudinot that allowed General Eble's largely Dutch engineers ('Pontooners') to build a 100-metre long bridge across the river with the aid of mobile forges, nails, axes, coal and timber that they had providentially kept with them throughout the horrors of the retreat from Moscow. Thanks largely to Oudinot and Eble's skill the Emperor and some 35,000 of his troops got away to fight another day - but many thousands more did not escape. This amazing book is must for all Napoleonic fans.

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