

Emperor Alexander. A superior officer of the enemy's had just been found in the great Hospital; he was charged with the delivery of this letter. It was by the baleful light of the flames of the bazaar that Napoleon finished it, and the Russian departed. He was to be the bearer of the news of this disaster to his Sovereign, whose only answer was this conflagration.

"Day-light favoured the efforts of the Duke of Treviso; he subdued the fire. The incendiaries kept themselves concealed. Doubts were entertained of their existence. At length, strict injunctions being issued, order restored, and alarm suspended, each took possession of a commodious house, or sumptuous palace, under the idea of their finding comforts that had been dearly purchased by long and excessive privations.

"Two officers had taken up their quarters in the buildings of the Kremlin. The view hence embraced the North and West of the City. About midnight they were awakened by an extraordinary light. They looked and beheld palaces filled with flames, which at first merely illuminated, but presently consumed the elegant and noble structures. They observed that the north wind drove these flames directly towards the Kremlin, and became alarmed for the safety of that fortress, in which the flower of the army and its commander reposed. They were apprehensive also for the surrounding houses, where our soldiers, attendants and horses, weary and exhausted, were doubtless buried in profound sleep. Sparks and burning fragments were already flying over the roofs of the Kremlin, when the wind, shifting from North to West, blew them in another direction.

"One of these officers relieved from apprehension respecting his corps then composed himself to sleep again, exclaiming "let others look to it now; 'tis no affair of ours." For such was the unconcern produced by the multiplicity of events and misfortunes, and such the selfishness arising from excessive suffering and fatigue, that they left to each only just strength and feeling sufficient for his personal service and preservation.

"It was not long before fresh and vivid lights again awoke them. They beheld other flames rising precisely in the new direction which the wind had taken towards the Kremlin, and they cursed French imprudence and want of discipline, to which they imputed this disaster. But three times did the wind thus change from North to West, and three times did these hostile fires, as if obstinately bent on the destruction of the imperial quarters, appear eager to follow this new direction.

"At this sight a strong suspicion seized their minds. Can the Muscovites, aware of our rash and thoughtless negligence, have conceived the hope of burning with Moscow our soldiers, heavy with wine, fatigue and sleep: or rather have they dared to imagine that they should involve Napoleon in this catastrophe; that the loss of such a man would be fully equivalent to that of their capital; that it was a result sufficiently important to justify the sacrifice of all Moscow to obtain it, that perhaps heaven in order to grant them so signal a victory, had decreed so great a sacrifice, and lastly, that so immense a colossus required a not less immense funeral pile?