

to spread the conflagration; it was necessary to strike down their hands with sabres to oblige them to loose their hold. It was said that these banditti had been released from prison by the Russian generals for the purpose of burning Moscow, and that in fact, so grand, so extreme a resolution could have been adopted only by patriotism and executed only by guilt.

Orders were immediately issued to shoot all the incendiaries on the spot. The army was on foot. The old guard, which exclusively occupied one part of the Kremlin, was under arms; the baggage and the horses ready loaded, filled the courts; we were struck dumb with astonishment, fatigue, and disappointment, on witnessing the destruction of such excellent quarters. Though masters of Moscow we were forced to go and bivouac without provisions beyond its gates.

"While our troops were yet struggling with the conflagration, and the army disputing their prey with the flames, Napoleon, whose sleep none had dared to disturb during the night, was awake by the twofold light of day and of the fire. His first feeling was that of irritation, and he would have commanded the devouring element, but soon paused and yielded to impossibility. Surprised that when he had struck at the heart of an Empire he should find there any other sentiment than submission and terror; he felt himself vanquished and surpassed in determination.

"This conquest, for which he had sacrificed every thing, was like a phantome which he had pursued, and which at the moment when he imagined he had grasped it, vanished in a mingled mass of smoke and flame.

"He was then seized with extreme agitation; he seemed to be consumed by the fires which surrounded him. He rose every moment, paced two and fro, and again sat down abruptly. He traversed his apartments with quick steps; his sudden and vehement gestures betrayed painful uneasiness: he quitted, resumed, and again quitted an urgent occupation: to hasten to the windows and watch the progress of the conflagration. Short and incoherent exclamations burst from his labouring bosom. "What a tremendous spectacle!—It is their own works!—So many palaces!—What extraordinary resolution!—What men!—Here are Scythians indeed!"

"Between the fire and him there was an extensive vacant space, then the Moskwa and its two quays; and yet the panes of the windows against which he leaned were already burning to the touch, and the constant exertions of sweepers, placed on the iron roofs of the palace were not sufficient to keep them clear of the numerous flakes of fire which alighted upon them.

"At this moment a rumour was spread that the Kremlin was undermined; this was confirmed it was said by Russians and by written documents. Some of the attendants were beside themselves with fear; while the military awaited unmoved what the orders of the Emperor and fate should decree; and to this alarm the Emperor replied only by a smile of incredulity.

"But he still walked convulsively; he stopped at every window, and beheld the terrible, the victorious element furiously consuming his brilliant conquest; seizing all the bridges, all the avenues to his