

done all hope of forcing his way through the Russians. In no contest by many degrees so desperate had he hitherto been engaged. Night found either army on the ground they had occupied at daybreak. The number of guns and prisoners taken by the French and the Russians was about equal ; and of either host there had fallen no less than forty thousand men. Some accounts raise the gross number of the slain to one hundred thousand. Such was the victory in honor of which Napoleon created Marshal Ney *Prince of Moskwa*.

Bonaparte, when advised by his generals, toward the conclusion of the day, to bring forward his own guard and hazard one final attack at their head, answered, "And if my guard fail, what means should I have for renewing the battle to-morrow?" The Russian commander, on the other hand, spared nothing to prolong the contest. During the night after, his cavalry made several attempts to break into the enemy's lines ; and it was only on receiving the reports of his regimental officers in the morning, that Kutusoff perceived the necessity of retiring until he should be further recruited. His army was the mainstay of his country ; on its utter dissolution, his master might have found it very difficult to form another ; but while it remained perfect in its organization, the patriotic population of the empire were sure to fill up readily every vacancy in its rank. Having ascertained then the extent of his loss, and buried his dead (among whom was the gallant Bagrathion) with great solemnity—the Russian slowly and calmly withdrew from his intrenchments, and marched on Mojaisk. Napoleon was so fortunate as to be joined exactly at this time by two fresh divisions from Smolensko, which nearly restored his muster to what it had been ere the battle began ; and, thus reinforced, commanded the pursuit to

be vigorously urged. On the 9th, the French van came in sight of the Russian rear again, and Bonaparte prepared for battle. But next morning Kutusoff had masked his march so effectually, by scattering clouds of Cossacks in every direction around the French, that down to the 12th the invader remained uncertain whether he had retreated on Kalouga, or directly to the capital. The latter he, at length, found to be the case ; and on the 4th of September Napoleon reached the Hill of Salvation ; so named because from that eminence the Russian traveler obtains his first view of the ancient metropolis, affectionately called "Mother Moscow," and hardly less sacred in his eye than Jerusalem. The soldiery beheld with joy and exultation the magnificent extent of the place ; its mixture of Gothic steeples and oriental domes ; the vast and splendid mansions of the haughty boyards, embosomed in trees ; and, high over all the rest, the huge towers of the Kremlin, at once the palace and the citadel of the old czars. The cry of "Moscow ! Moscow !" ran through the lines. Napoleon himself reined in his horse and exclaimed, "Behold at last that celebrated city !" He added, after a brief pause, "It was time."

Bonaparte had not gazed long on this great capital ere it struck him as something remarkable that no smoke issued from the chimneys. Neither appeared there any military on the battlements of the old walls and towers. There reached him neither message of defiance, nor any deputation of citizens to present the keys of their town, and recommend it and themselves to his protection. He was yet marveling what these strange circumstances could mean, when Murat, who commanded in the van, and had pushed on to the gates, came back and informed him that he had held a parley with Miarodowitch, the general of the Russian



rear-guard, and that, unless two hours were granted for the safe withdrawing of his troops, he would at once set fire to Moscow. Napoleon immediately granted the armistice. The two hours elapsed, and still no procession of nobles or magistrates made its appearance.

On entering the city the French found it deserted by all but the very lowest and most wretched of its vast population. They soon spread themselves over its innumerable streets, and commenced the work of pillage. The magnificent palaces of the Russian boyards, the bazaars of the merchants, churches, and convents, and public buildings of every description, swarmed with their numbers. The meanest soldier clothed himself in silk and furs, and drank at his pleasure the costliest wines. Napoleon, perplexed at the abandonment of so great a city, had some difficulty in keeping together thirty thousand men, who followed Miarodowitch, and watched the walls on that side.

The emperor, who had retired to rest in a suburban palace, was awakened at midnight by the cry of *fire*. The chief market-place was in flames; and some hours elapsed ere they could be extinguished by the exertions of the soldiery. While the fire still blazed, Napoleon established his headquarters in the Kremlin,\* and wrote, by that fatal light, a letter to the czar, containing proposals for peace. The letter was committed to a prisoner of rank; no answer ever reached Bonaparte.

Next morning found the fire extinguished, and the French officers were busied throughout the day in selecting houses for their residence. The flames, how-

\* An extensive fortress, including a palace and several churches and convents.

ever, burst out again as night set in, and under circumstances which might well fill the minds of the invaders with astonishment and with alarm. Various detached parts of the city appeared to be at once on fire; combustibles and matches were discovered in different places as if laid deliberately; the water pipes were cut: the wind changed three times in the course of the night, and the flames always broke out again with new vigor in the quarter from which the prevailing breeze blew right on the Kremlin. It was sufficiently plain that Rostopcein, governor of Moscow, had adopted the same plan of resistance in which Smolensko had already been sacrificed; and his agents, whenever they fell into the hands of the French, were massacred without mercy.

The efforts to stop the flames were all in vain, and it was not long ere a raging fire swept the capital east, west, north, and south. During four days the conflagration continued, and four-fifths of the city were wholly consumed. "Palaces and temples," says the Russian author, Karamsin, "monuments of art and miracles of luxury, the remains of ages long since past, and the creations of yesterday, the tombs of ancestors, and the cradles of children, were indiscriminately destroyed. Nothing was left of Moscow save the memory of her people, and their deep resolution to avenge her fall."

During two days Napoleon witnessed from the Kremlin the spread of this fearful devastation, and, in spite of continual showers of sparks and brands, refused to listen to those who counseled retreat. On the third night, the equinoctial gale rose, the Kremlin itself took fire, and it became doubtful whether it would be possible for him to withdraw in safety; and then he at length rode out of Moscow, through streets in many



parts arched over with flames, and buried, where this was not the case, in one dense mantle of smoke. "These are, indeed, Scythians," said Napoleon. He halted, and fixed his headquarters at Petrowsky, a country palace of the czar, about a league distant. But he could not withdraw his eyes from the rueful spectacle which the burning city presented, and from time to time repeated the same words: "This bodes great misfortune."

Napoleon again reoccupied the Kremlin, around which lay in smoldering heaps the fairest portion of the city, on the 20th, when the conflagration had spent its fury. With characteristic levity, the French troops opened a theater, whose applauded actors were sent from Paris by the order of Napoleon.

The silence of Alexander began to awaken the presentiment of still more serious events. The successes of the Russian forces in the battles with their enemy on the south, threatened to cut off communications with the magazines in Poland. But the resistless foe, whose power the emperor feared, was advancing upon him. *Winter*, with its northern severity and dismal length, was at hand. A second letter to the autocrat, was despatched, with proposals of peace.

Count Lauriston presented himself to Kutusoff at his headquarters, early in October, but was refused a passport. Kutusoff denied the right to give one, but offered to transmit the letter to St. Petersburg. It drew forth no reply. Autumn scattered the sere leaves; and to the dismay of Napoleon, October 13th, three weeks earlier than at any recorded period before, the snow shrouded the landscape, and fringed the blackened walls of abandoned cities. Upon the 18th, in a sanguinary conflict at Vincovo between Bennigsen and Murat, the French sustained an immense loss.

This hastened the evacuation of Moscow, which the emperor had seen to be inevitable. The immense host poured through the gates into the merciless embrace of the destroying elements. Mortier lingered with 3,000 men, to guard the retreat, and blow up as the farewell peal of war's infernal thunder, the massive walls of the Kremlin.

Desprez, Joseph Bonaparte's aide-de-camp, visited Napoleon just before the evacuation, with despatches from the King of Spain, presenting to the emperor his declining power in the Peninsula. Desprez, upon his return to Paris, wrote to his sovereign, the displeasure of the emperor regarding his management of the war, and gave the following account of the grand army at Moscow:

"The army, when I quitted it, was in the most horrible misery. For a long while previously the disorder and losses had been frightful; the artillery and cavalry had ceased to exist. The different regiments were all mixed together; the soldiers marched pell-mell, and sought only how to prolong mechanically their existence. Although the enemy was on all sides of us, thousands of men strayed every day into the neighboring villages, and fell into the hands of the Cossacks. Nevertheless, large as is the number of prisoners, that of the dead exceeds it. It is impossible to describe the famine; during more than a month there were no rations; dead horses were the only resource, and even the marshals were frequently in want of bread. The severity of the climate rendered hunger more fatal; every night we left at the bivouac several hundred corpses. I think that I may, without exaggeration, estimate those who have been lost in this manner at one hundred thousand—the truth is best expressed by saying that the army is dead. The young guard, which