

Richmond, December 29, 1811

Dear Sir,

The gloom which ??? the countenance every being to be met with, is highly distressing to the feeling breast. Gracious God! What is seen of misery and distress did this place exhibit on the morning after the dreadful calamity—Persons appearing on the fatal spot making inquiries, and extending the almost destroyed bodies, in hopes to trace some resemblance of a dear and lamented relative or acquaintance. It is so ready ascertained that 75 have thus untimely perished, besides a number more which are missing, or their names not yet known. It is presumed that in all upwards of 150 souls have perished in the space of 15 minutes. It was first discovered by some particles of fire falling on the stage during the performance, yet the audience were not at all alarmed at this, supposing it apart of the play, (the piece being entirely new) until on of the actors casting his eyes up, exclaimed “ My God! The Theatre is all in flames”. Then the distressing scene commenced. Many precipitated themselves from windows, whilst others are seen with their clothes on fire yet could not be persuaded to jump out. In less than 10 minutes the roof fell in, burying in its ruins be unfortunate victims who had not had time to escape. The fire originated from a lap hung in the scenery, and in the hurry of hoisting one this scenes, was entirely forgotten—The scenes being so close that a person could scarcely see through them, and entirely obscured from the view of the audience, the fire was not perceived till the whole roof was in flames.

The remains of the victims were, at 12 o'clock this day interred beneath the ruins of the Theatre. It is contemplated to build a church on the spot, in the center of which there is to be a monument erected to their memory.

The councils have passed an ordinance forbidding any public spectacle or dancing assembly, for the space of four months under a severe penalty.

I read with pleasure the information of David's speedy recovery, and request you would let me know whether the accident has in any way materially disfigured him--Present my best respects to him.

I beg you would apologize to Mr. White for my unpardonable neglect in not informing him, through you, of my reasons for not having executed his commission. I called, the day following that on which I arrived here, on Miss. White and delivered the letter entrusted to my care. Mr. Jones, I am told, lives about 5 miles from this place, and is seldom in town. I have not yet been able to see him, but intend riding out as far as his house on Sunday next for that purpose. Should I succeed in receiving the money, I will immediately dispose of it as directed.

I requested your good officers in favor of my friend Bennett, I was well aware of the dangers of the Embassy, should it be disliked, but at the same time recollected that your courage in affairs of this kind had never been questioned, I must confess I thought you, among all my acquaintances, the person most likely to undertake it, with any degree of

success. By the bye, Jack, your being discarded suitor is entirely new to me--I could not have believed it had not come from the best authority--- yourself. Should its execution, however, in the least interfere with your prospects, I should be sorry you would proceed any further in the business.

They inhabitants Richmond, as far as my knowledge extends, are hospitable unfriendly. When I have a little more time for visiting and become better acquainted perhaps you will receive a description of them. The Ladies--- but I will leave that subject to be disposed of by Corry, who seems to ?????? self better calculated for the toil, by barely obscuring ????. Please me much.

Understanding in a very short time that the Richmond jous were a trifling, profligate set of dogs, we determined to have no communication with them; though frequently ????. To call and see them at the different offices (their usual visiting places) when they were employed, we have not in a single instance complied. Taking our treatment in high dudgeon, they have thought proper to excommunicate us.

Corry and myself are well, and desire are complements, etc. to the ladies is usual.

Yours sincerely,

N McLaughlin