

## LITERATURE.

## THE FIRST DECEMBER SNOW.

As for the first wild flower,  
In the early time of spring;  
As for the summer shower  
When the earth is languishing;  
As for the rainbow's blending;  
As for the day-star's glow—  
Have I looked for the descending  
Of the first December snow.

It comes! on pinions airy  
The virgin flakes alight,  
Like the torn plumes of a fairy,  
Or the apple-blossoms white;  
With undulating motion,  
The frozen ground they reach,  
Or melt into the ocean  
That booms along the beach.

Why watch I thus the falling  
Of the first December snow?  
Because on me 'tis calling  
In the voice of long ago;  
Because it ever blendeth  
With the memories of the boy;  
Each flake as it descendeth  
Enshrouds a perished joy!

O! for those days when rushing  
Into the powdery air,  
I felt the free, wild gushing  
Of a spirit without care!  
How through the drifts that whitened  
Our window sills at home,  
I dashed with heart unfrightened,  
Like a dolphin through the foam!

And then the merry ringing  
Of the sleigh-bells at the door,  
And the winter evening, bringing  
A thousand pleasures more!  
And the dear friends who surrounded  
Our log-devouring hearth,  
And the old songs that resounded,  
And the hours of blameless mirth!

Ah, first snow of December!  
These joys thou dost recall;  
But with them I remember  
They shall no more befall:  
Companions have departed,  
With whom that season fled;  
And some are weary-hearted,  
And some are with the dead.

## THE CAPTURED BANNER!

BY NED BUNTLINE.

"CARAMBA! QUE INSOLENCIA!" These words were uttered by a lovely woman, whose flushed cheek, flashing eye, and knitted brow, spoke even more than words, of indignation which filled her heart.

She was the young wife of Commodore Coe, the commander of the small navy of Montevideo. The lady was Spanish by birth, as well as in feeling, and the cause of her anger was the sight of a ship which had been for two days standing off and on before the harbour, using every signal of insult and defiance, to induce the vessel of Coe to come out and fight him.—This the latter could not do, for two reasons—the first was illness, which confined him to his cot; the second, that he had not the third of a crew—not even men enough to work his battery.

At the moment when she uttered the words that commence this sketch, Brown, the commander of the Buenos-Ayrea ship, had hoisted a flag at his gaff; whereon was embroidered, in large legible letters, the inscription "Coe, the Coward!" This was more than his noble, fiery wife could stand; for well she knew her husband's truth and valor. After gazing one instant at the flag, she raised her jewelled hand, and taking therefrom a diamond of great value, she cried to the officers and men who stood around her on the deck:

"I will give this diamond to any man who will bring me yonder flag!"

For a moment there was no response. The men looked at their officers, the officers glanced at each other, but volunteers for a service so desperate seemed scarce.

"What! is there not one of all of you who dare the trial? Is my husband's ship indeed manned with cowards?" exclaimed the lady, while her beautiful lip curled with scorn, and her flashing eye gleamed with the fire of contempt.

A young officer, an Englishman who had been lately appointed, stepped forward and modestly said:

"I was only waiting for my seniors to speak, Senora. Had any one of them volunteered, I should have begged to accompany him. As it is, I pledge myself to bring you yonder flag before the sun rises again, or to die! But I ask not your jewel as a prize for my success; one tress of your glossy hair shall be my reward."

"You shall have both, brave boy!" replied the lady; and her cold look of scorn changed into a sweet smile, as she asked his name.

"It is Frank Bennett, Senora," replied the young man, as he blushed beneath her earnest gaze.

He was slim but well formed; and looked very young, but in his dark blue eye and compressed lip, an observer could read one whose manhood was not made by years alone.

The sun was setting behind a bank of slowly rising clouds, which threatened darkness and storm. The moment that his services were accepted, young Bennett turned to the crew, and as he glanced among them, said, "I want six men to man the whale-boat which hangs at the after-davits!"

Struck by his gallantry, nearly one half of the crew started forward. Now that they had a leader, volunteers were plenty. Bennett glanced his eye over them, and in a few moments chose six by name, men whom he new to be both daring and firm.

"Go sharpen your cutlasses," said he; "I shall not have a pistol or a musket in the boat. If we fight, it must be steel to steel, and breast to breast; for we succeed or die!"

Those men answered only with a look. They were of that class whose motto is "Deeds not words." They hurried below to obey his orders, and others proceeded by his directions to muffle the oars of the boat, to put sail, water, &c., in it.

One half hour later the sky was covered with clouds, and darkness had set in. Bennett had been careful to take the compass-course of the enemy's ship when the last light of the dying day gave opportunity, and by this alone he hoped to find her. At this time the lady was on deck, standing by the binnacle-light, regarding the preparations of the little party who were about to shove off. At the moment when the boat's crew cried out that all was ready for a start, their young leader came aft to the side of the Senora, and taking from his neck a miniature, he handed it and a letter to her, saying:

"If I am not on board at sunrise, lady, please send that miniature to the direction of the letter."

The lady looked at the picture. It was the likeness of a young and beautiful girl. A tear filled the Senora's eye.

"You need not go!" said she. "No: you love, perchance are beloved. Your life is precious—I will not expose it. This is—"

"My only sister, whom I most adore," interrupted the youth; "but one who would scorn me if I played the coward or dishonoured my name. Send the letter and likeness to her, if I fall. Farewell till to-morrow—or, forever."

The lady was about to answer, and again to entreat him to stay; but ere she could speak he was over the bulwarks, and the boat had shoved off.

The night was pitchy dark. A calm was on the sea and in the air, but portentous of a storm. A small binnacle light and compass had been placed in the boat, and by these Frank shaped his course, himself taking the tiller and steering.

"Give way cheerly, men!—a long, a strong, and steady pull!" said he in a low tone, as he left the ship's side; and he soon felt, by the trembling of the frail boat, that his directions were obeyed.

Out right into the offing he pulled, regardless of the rising clouds; keeping his eye fixed steadily on his compass, until he knew if the vessel had remained hove to as she was at sun set, that he must be very near her. But he looked in vain to see her dark hull loom up in the gloom; he looked in vain to see a light which might guide to her.

Admiral Brown was too old a fox to show his position by lights.

At this moment, when he was completely at a loss which way to steer, the dark clouds which had been gathering over him burst into a long vivid flash of lightning, and a peal of deafening thunder. He heard not the thunder, he heeded not the rising storm, for that flash of lightning had showed him the vessel, not one cable's length from him.

"Steady, boys!—steady!" he whispered when the thunder ceased, "I shall pull directly under her stern, and go on board;" and then as he glanced up at the gaff, where the flag had been hoisted, he saw that it was not there! It had been pulled down!

He paused; thought for a moment what could be done; and then formed his resolution.

"I shall go on board alone, men," said he; "keep the boat where she is. If the flag is where I think it is, I will have it. If I am not back in five minutes, and you hear no alarm, shove off to our ship, and tell them that Frank Bennett died like a man! You must be cautious; reef the foresail, for the storm will be down upon us in less than ten minutes!"

All of this was whispered to the men whose heads were bent forward to hear the orders which they dared not disobey, much as they wished to share their leader's peril.

Springing lightly from the boat, Frank caught the quarter-netting with his hands, and noiselessly ascended to the bulwarks. He could hear the regular tramp of the officer of the deck, who having already had every thing reefed down for the blow, had nothing to do but to pace the deck; but it was so dark that he could not see him.

A second more and the brave boy was down on the deck, and at the cabin door, which stood slightly ajar. He peeped in through the narrow crack, and saw the red faced old Admiral seated at his round table with two of his officers by his side, engaged over the con-

tents of a square bottle which looked very like that usually found to contain schnapps.

A glance at a settee just to the left of this table, showed the object of the enterprise. The flag for which he had periled his life lay there, where it had been carelessly thrown after it was hauled down.

The young officer did not pause long to consider what to do, but quietly walked into the cabin, and taking off his cap, bowed very politely to the officers, and as he stepped toward the flag, said in a calm and courteous manner to the admiral.

"I have come to borrow this banner, sir, to wear to-morrow, if you please!"

"Who the devil are you? What does this mean?" cried Brown, as he and his officers sprang to their feet.

"I am Midshipman Bennett, sir, of the Montevideoan service!" replied Frank, who had now seized the flag; "and I mean to carry this flag to Commodore Coe!"

As he said this he bounded to the cabin door, followed closely by a bullet from Brown's pistol, which grazed his ear, and ere the alarm became general, he stood upon the taffrail of the vessel.

"Look out for me below!" he shouted, and flung himself into the sea, without a moment's hesitation.—His boat's crew recognised his voice, he was caught in a moment and dragged into the boat, while a volley of pistol balls was sent down at random by those who were above.

The storm had now broken, and the wind began to come in with fierce and fitful gusts.

"Up foresail!—hurra, lads!—up foresail, and let her slide!" cried the young hero, as soon as he could breathe after his ducking.

The crew did so, and the next moment the little boat was flying in towards the harbour before the blast, like a glad sea-bird winging its way to its young one's nest.

The enemy opened a harmless random fire of grape shot in their direction, but it only served to tell the anxious watchers on board of Coe's vessel that something had occurred. The latter, therefore at once showed lights, and enabled Frank to make a straight course for her.

It was but half an hour after the first gun had been fired by Brown's vessel, that the boat of our young adventurer rounded to, alongside of his own craft.

"Have you captured the flag?" cried the Senora, as Bennett bounded over the side.

The only answer she received was the banner, wet as from the water, and cut in two places by the balls which had been fired at its captor.

The lights of the vessel gleamed not half so bright as did that lady's eyes when she caught the noble youth in her arms, and kissed him again and again.

## TRACINGS OF THE ALPS.

Ye Ice-falls! ye that, from the Mountain's brow,  
Adown enormous Ravines slope amain—  
Torrents, me thinks, that heard a mighty Voice,  
And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge!  
Motionless torrents! silent cataracts!  
Who made you glorious as the gates of Heaven  
Beneath the full keen Moon!

COLERIDGE.

The first sight of the Alps is an era in one's existence. I had of course read of them since I had read anything, had heard people describe their beauty and sublimity as something wonderful, and fully prepared myself for a natural scene far beyond any that ever met my eyes before. Yet so truly inconceivable are the extraordinary features of nature, that the reality came at last with the force of perfect novelty. It is not, however, that the objects impress us in proportion to their actual magnitude. On the contrary, I am willing to own that, taking Ben Nevis at 4370 feet, our impression from it is not multiplied by quite so much as three when we behold an Alp known to be 13,000. When we look, moreover, at the Staubbach, and know that that misty cascade falls directly from a rock as high above the place where we stand as the top of Arthur's Seat is above the plain at its foot, we do not receive the impression of altitude which we would expect. The mental eye seems to get accommodated to the new scale on which all nature is cast, and thus, it would appear, there is even a kind of disappointment inevitable to all fresh visitants of the Alps. Yet no such feeling ever tells or can tell upon them, as the actual appearance of all objects is far more than enough to solemnify and delight any mind of the least sensibility. We may lose much, because, in fact, we can nowhere get into a position where the whole mass of any part of the Alps may bear upon our sense at once; but still, whether we wander under the shades of those mighty hills, or pass over any part of them, whether we survey them from some elevated peak, or from some distant point—such as Vevay, or Berne, or even the Jure—we must confess, with hushed and awe-struck spirit, that our ideas of external nature are receiving an extension which might almost be said to double in a moment all the former experiences of a life.

The Alps may be comprehensively described as the central eminent ground of Western Europe, a fact clearly enough indicated by the descent of the affluents of the Rhone, Rhine, Danube, and Po from the midst of them, each to fall into its own sea. It has been discovered of late years that they do not form what may properly be called chains of mountains, but rather groups surrounding certain centres, these centres being