

# THE VARSITY

A Weekly Journal of Literature, University Thought and Events.

Vol. VII.

University of Toronto, Feb. 19, 1887.

No. 14.

"MARIE."

SONNET.

*Translated from Alfred de Musset.*

As the woodland flower of spring  
First breath receives,  
Smiling mysterious  
As it opes its leaves.

As the chalice of the stalk  
Unfolds to sight  
Quivers to earth  
A new delight.

So Marie with blue eyes upraised,  
As thy lips part  
Singing thy heart,  
Amid the light and sound,  
Thy soul is given  
Trembling to heaven.

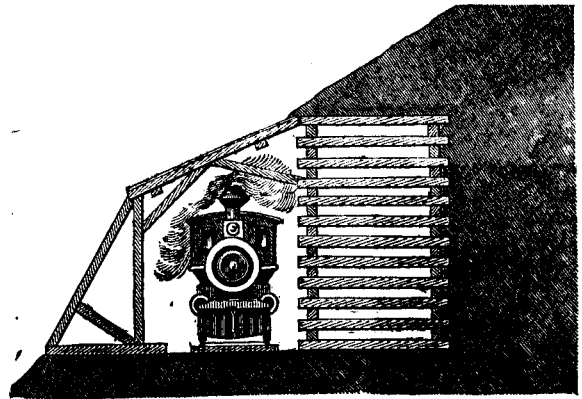
G. F. BURTON.

## SNOW SHEDS IN THE SELKIRKS.

Any traveller in Eastern Canada who is familiar with the light structure of the snow sheds on the Intercolonial Railway can form little or no idea of the snow sheds in the Selkirk range of mountains on the Canadian Pacific Railway, or understand the part they have to play in keeping the road open in the winter time. The snow sheds on the Intercolonial Railway are made of a framework, like that of a barn, covered with planks nailed on, with small spaces between, very much like the boards on a fence. The primary object of these sheds is to prevent snow drifts from accumulating on the road. On railways which pass through a mountainous country the snow sheds assume a much more durable and permanent character, as the service that is expected of them is much more important. It is, in fact, to keep the line open and clear from the accumulation of snow and ice brought down by avalanches, or, as they are more frequently called, "snow slides."

A writer in a recent number of *Chambers' Journal* divides avalanches into four kinds, viz., the powdery, the creeping, the glacier, and the true avalanche, or avalanche proper. The first he describes as being composed of finely divided snow and ice, which is broken up into the form of powder in the descent. This kind of avalanche is the most likely to disturb the air, and so produce a hurricane, the vast power of which it is impossible to estimate. The creeping avalanche, as its name implies, is produced when vast masses of snow and ice move slowly down a gradual slope. The glacier avalanche is brought about by the mass of ice at the lower extremity of a glacier becoming detached and sliding down into the moraine below. Lastly, the avalanche proper is the rapid descent of a mass of snow, which, beginning high up the mountain slope, and increasing in volume and speed as it descends, rushes headlong into the valley below. It is to resist the effects of snow slides of this kind that the snow sheds in the Selkirks have been constructed.

The sheds themselves are composed of a crib-work similar to that used in the construction of wharves. It is made of heavy cedar timbers, twelve inches square, with ends dovetailed into one another, and spiked. The crib is securely tied, and is thoroughly filled with boulders and loose masses of rock. It stands in a space cut out of the mountain slope beside the railway track, and between it and the mountain. On the outer side of the track a series of triangular frames, placed at short intervals, made of the same material and same sized timbers as the crib, are used to support the lower end of the roof, which extends downwards from the crib in a slanting direction. The crib is carried up much higher than the outer wall, so that the slope of the roof is, where practicable, as nearly in the same angle as the slope of the mountain as possible. The roof is strongly braced, and together with the outer wall and crib forms a structure sufficiently strong to bear the force of the descending snow, ice, boulders, and other *débris*, which is carried down in the snow slide. The roof and outer wall is planked, so that the interior of the shed is quite dark, but in summer time the outer wall plank immediately under the eave can be removed, in order to give light and better ventilation. The use of the crib-work on the inside is to prevent the whole shed from being carried away by the down-rush of the snow from above. The shed is of such a form that it offers very little resistance to the descending mass of snow, but allows the avalanche to pass over the roof and pile itself up in the valley below.



The track of a snow slide is very easily discernible even in summer time, from the fact that the uprooted trees, earth, boulders, and *débris* carried down, are piled up at the bottom of the valley, spreading out in a fan-shaped mass, and making a smoother and less acute slope than the rest of the mountain surface. The snow slide cuts a path for itself through trees, removing boulders, earth, roots, &c.; and the following summer only bushes and shrubs grow in the path made by the avalanche. The sides or margins of these slides show trees and rocks in a disturbed condition, though not carried away completely, as in the centre of the slide. Each year that a snow slide takes place in any particular locality, renders the probable recurrence of a slide in the same place more and more certain, as each year the slope becomes smoother and more free from obstructions of all kinds.

As the traveller proceeds west from Donald, or the first crossing of the Columbia River on the C.P.R., he finds himself passing down the canon of that river on the left bank,