

POETRY.

DECEMBER.

The Winter wind is moaning low the requiem of the year;
The days are growing short again, and fields forlorn and sere;
The sunny sky is waxing dim, and chill the hazy air,
And tossing trees, before the breeze, are turning brown and bare.
All nature and her children now prepare for rougher days;
The squirrel makes his winter bed, and hazel hoard purveys;
The sunny swallow spreads his wing, to seek a brighter sky;
And boding owl, with nightly howl, says cloud and storm are nigh!
No more 'tis sweet to walk abroad among the evening dews;
The flowers are fled from every path with all their scents and hues;
The joyous bird no more is heard, save where his slender song
The robin drops, as meek he hops, the withered leaves among.
Those withered leaves, that slender song, a solemn truth convey;
In wisdom's ear they speak aloud of frailty and decay;
They say that man's apportioned year shall have its winter too.
Shall rise and shine, and then decline as all around him do.
They tell him all he has on earth, his brightest, dearest things,
His loves and friendships, bodes and fears, have each their falls and springs;
A wave upon a moonlight sea, a leaf before the blast,
A summer flower, an April hour, that gleams, and then is past.
And be it so! I know it well! myself and all that's mine
Must roll on with the rolling year, and ripen to decline.
I would not shun the solemn truth; to me it is not drear,
While I can rise above the skies, and feel that God is near.
It only makes me think with pride this earth is not my home;
It sends me on from present care, to joy and peace to come;
It bids me take, with thankful heart, whatever God may send,
Content to go, through weal or woe, to glory in the end.
Then murmur on, ye winter winds, remind me of my doom,
Ye lengthened nights still image forth the darkness of the tomb!
Eternal summer lights the breast where Jesus deigns to shine;
I mourn no loss, I shun no cross, while Thou, O Lord, art mine!

(Continued from first page.)

splendour opened on the rulers of Mexico. Father Marco de Nizza, who had been sent on a northern mission, brought a report of seven mighty cities, whose lofty mansions had their doors studded with precious stones, while the meanest utensils were of gold and silver. A contest instantly arose between Cortes and the Viceroy, which should seize this brilliant prize; and though Cortes, by the grant of the Emperor, had the undoubted right, the Viceroy, having the power in his hands, would not allow such an opportunity to escape him. Assuming the entire direction of the enterprise, he despatched Vasquez de Coronado, with a chosen body of troops, to take possession of this northern Eldorado. Coronado, made his way across a thousand difficulties, and with the loss of a great part of his armament; when, having reached the desired spot, he discovered that the narrative of the worthy friar had been a string of lies from beginning to end. The kingdom of the Seven Cities was merely a cluster of villages in a tolerably fertile country, but which presented no such quantity of gold or precious stones as to be of the smallest importance.—The dream of golden kingdoms vanished; but successive expeditions under Cabrillo and Viscaino, were sent with instructions to examine the north-west coast, and even to pass through the supposed Strait of Anian into the Atlantic. Neither of these officers, however, could reach far beyond Cape Mendocino, in lat. 40 deg.; the dreadful attacks of the scurvy, a disease of which the nature and cure were then alike unknown, obliged them to return, not only without discovering the imaginary strait, but ignorant that it did not exist. The decrepitude into which the Spanish government soon afterwards sunk, and the mystery which, in fear and weakness, it threw over all its transactions, at once diminished the number of these voyages of discovery, and prevented their results from ever reaching the world, unless by dubious and circuitous channels.

A deep veil still hung over the extremities of the Pacific, and the junction of the continents of America and Asia. This veil was lifted up by the exploratory genius of Cook. A premature fate, indeed, arrested that great navigator in the career of discovery; but he and Captain Clerke, who followed in the path marked out by him, saw the two continents, separated by Behring's Straits, and America stretching to the north and east.—This voyage, by disclosing the immense

breadth of America at this latitude, made the hopes of the western passage darker than ever. That continent had hitherto been conceived as terminating to the north in a point or cape, after passing which, the navigator would be at once in the South Sea, and in full sail to China and Japan. Now, between the Atlantic and Pacific, there was found to intervene a space of nearly three thousand miles, or a fourth of the circumference of the globe. Geographers, viewing the coast running northwards from Behring's Straits, and Hudson's and Baffin's Bays, all inclosed by land, received and constructed their maps under the impression that an unbroken mass of land reached onwards to the Pole, and that all these boundaries were for ever barred against the navigator.

A new light, meantime, broke in suddenly from an opposite quarter. The Hudson's Bay Company had formed a settlement, with a view to the traffic in furs, for which this otherwise dreary region afforded ample scope. They obtained an exclusive privilege, of which they must indeed have made an ample use, if, as Foster alleges, for 40000l. of English goods, they obtained articles which sold in England for 120,000l.—However, as is usual in companies so endowed, their affairs were far from flourishing. They had been taken bound by their charter, to use their utmost efforts for the discovery of the Strait of Anian and the north-west passage; yet it has been confidently averred, that their most strenuous exertions were directed to the prevention of any such discovery. They could not, however, prevent some efforts from being made. Knight, one of their own servants, urged the matter with such zeal, that it was impossible to avoid fitting him out with two ships; but he never returned; and the whole of this expedition perished. Afterwards the Admiralty, instigated by a Mr. Dobbs, who was seized with an enthusiastic zeal upon this subject, sent out Captain Middleton, an officer of spirit and enterprise, to explore that great opening in the northern part of Hudson's Bay, commonly called the Welcome. Middleton made some progress, but described his course as being at last arrested by a "frozen strait," through which there flowed a current coming apparently from the Atlantic, and rendering improbable the supposed connexion with any other sea. His report, however, gave rise at home to a fierce controversy. He was denounced by his own surgeon and clerk to Mr. Dobbs, and by Mr. Dobbs to the public, as a traitor, who, bribed by the Company, studiously counteracted the very object for which he had been commissioned. An extraordinary zeal was kindled in the nation; 10,000l. was subscribed to fit out a fresh armament, and parliament voted 20,000l. to the fortunate crew who should achieve the grand discovery. This new expedition, however, without penetrating so far as Middleton, found nothing at variance with his report, and the public ardour subsided. The real light from that quarter was obtained through the extensive rambles taken on land by the agents of the Fur Companies. Mr. Hearne, sent in 1769 on a mission from Hudson's Bay, followed northward the course of a river now bearing his name, till at a point, hitherto supposed to exist in the most inland depths of America, he found the sea! Sir Alexander Mackenzie, acting for the North-west Company at Montreal, afterwards proceeded in the same direction to a point twenty degrees farther west, where he followed another river also to the sea. This double discovery gave entirely new aspect to the geography of North America. It now became probable that, instead of an unbroken land, stretching into the depth of the Polar regions, there was a continuous ocean bounding it, at a latitude which did not absolutely preclude the hope of an open and regular passage.

The important observations however, did not take immediate effect on the public.—They seem, on the contrary, to have lain dormant, silently fermenting in minds which meditated on these subjects, till, early in this century, that remarkable exploratory zeal arose, of which the effects have been so important. Mr. Barrow, himself eminent as a traveller, gave the first impulse both to the nation and the government, which embarked in this career with a steadiness, judgment, and, above all, an inflexible perseverance, of which there is no former example. Africa was the first theatre; but the northern seas, which Mr. Scoresby had already made an object of interest, soon attracted equal attention. This has led to a series of enterprises which have not, in point of practical result, differed materially from those formerly undertaken, but which have remarkably enlarged our ideas as to the form and structure of the globe, and made signal displays of the prowess and hardihood of British seamen. They are too recent, and too familiar to call for any detailed narration; but it may not be uninteresting to collect into one view a rapid outline of their general tenor and result.

The first of the series was destined, under the conduct of Captain Ross, to make the round of Baffin's Bay, and look more narrowly than that navigator was suspected to have done, into every sound and inlet which

could afford an entrance either into the Pacific, or the grand Polar basin. Captain Ross was an officer of great merit, who had performed valuable services in the northern seas, yet was he not altogether of that pushing and adventurous turn which is necessary to find or force a way through these mighty barriers. He made the circuit of these shores like a skilful navigator, and brought a report confirming all the observations of Baffin, and coming to the same conclusion, that there was a bay only, affording no farther passage. The wide entrance of Lancaster Sound had indeed been looked up into; but, at the distance of about twenty miles, its shores appeared to the eye to meet, and form an inclosed inlet. This conclusion, however, became the subject of much sceptical discussion. It was argued by those accustomed to naval perspective, that Captain Ross had not penetrated deep enough to form any sure judgment upon this point; and that a strait, even of considerable breadth, if winding or varied by capes, presents to the spectators the precise appearance of an inclosed arm of the sea. Such was the impression of Captain Parry, the second in command, who reported at home his sanguine hope, that by this channel would be found the long-sought for passage.

The views of the Admiralty coincided entirely with those of Captain Parry, whom they immediately sent out with the command of a fresh expedition. The result was brilliant; Captain Parry found all his predictions fulfilled, and through Lancaster Sound penetrated into the grand basin of the Polar sea! Here he coasted along, not America, but ranges of large islands, which narrowed the sea through which he sailed into little more than a broad strait, communicating only by inlets with whatever sea might lie beyond. These inlets, however, were so blocked up with ice setting in from the westward, that Captain Parry, in the course of two seasons, vainly attempted to make his way through them, and was obliged to return, with only the glory acquired by having penetrated so much farther than any former navigator.

The Polar basin being now ascertained to exist, another voyage was planned, with the view of entering it by a different approach. Hudson's Bay had not yet been fully explored. Middleton had, indeed, described his progress as arrested by a frozen strait; but this might be a casual obstruction—and his testimony had been extremely questioned at the time. Captain Parry undertook the adventure with his usual alacrity; and in the middle of August arrived at the boundary which arrested Middleton. The testimony of that navigator was then found to be exceedingly faithful; and his frozen strait by no means undeserving the name. However, the new adventurers worked their way through it, and after going over and verifying the observations of Middleton upon several of the sounds and inlets, proceeded to the examination of the coasts beyond.—They were soon interrupted by the setting in of the Arctic winter, and with some difficulty sawed their way through the ice to a station in which the vessels could pass in safety that rigorous season. Next summer they proceeded northward along a large mass of land, which they named Melville Peninsula. At last they arrived at a strait, which, by land surveys, was found to lead into the wide and open basin of the Polar sea; but it was so blocked up by ice driven into it by the western currents, that every attempt to penetrate was wholly abortive.

Captain Parry was sent out a third time, on his first line of discovery, to make trial of a broad channel leading to the south, which, amid others that appeared more promising, had obtained before only a very superficial notice. This voyage failed, less from any absolute barrier opposed by nature, than from the dreadful concussion sustained from a field of ice by one of the ships, which produced the necessity of abandoning it, and carrying home its crew in the other vessel.

Although it had been thus established, that there was a Polar basin, and a great ocean, bounding the whole northern shore of America, and this even in no very inaccessible latitude, yet there was an end to all hope of a regular and practicable passage between the Atlantic and the Pacific. The former was cut off from the Polar sea by a continuous crowd of large islands, separated only by narrow channels, in which the masses of floating ice always lodge, and into which they are even driven by the current which seems constantly to set in from the westward. Doubtless, after multiplied trials, one vessel might pass in some fortunate conjuncture; but this would be a very empty boast; and no merchant assuredly, would forego his sure and beaten track, for another where there would be ten chances to one against ever reaching his destination.—It was only then, along the shore, and by boats, that there could be a reasonable hope to explore and delineate this hitherto unknown boundary of the western world.

The main body, on this occasion, proceeded not as before from Hudson's Bay, but from New York, by way of Lake Huron;—a more circuitous, but more easy, and in several respects more commodious route.

This mode of investigation, accordingly, had not been neglected. Contemporaneous,

and combined with, Captain Parry's second voyage, a land expedition had been sent from Hudson's Bay, under Captain Franklin, with the hope, that the two parties might fall in with, and give aid to each other in their perilous search. Captain Franklin, after spending the winter on the northern lakes, reached, in summer, the mouth of the Coppermine river, and spread the first sail on the Arctic ocean, which bounds Northern America. Navigation, however, is necessarily slow on an unknown, winding, and embayed coast; where it cannot be guessed what is bay, and what strait—what is continent, and what island—and where these questions must be resolved often by lengthened and tedious experiment. This coast happened, too, to be very deeply indented; and, when they had run into the farthest depth of Coronation Gulf and Bathurst Inlet, they came to a point which the season rendered it necessary to call Turn-around—although it was not above two hundred miles from the spot on which they had first launched on the Arctic ocean. Their provisions were nearly consumed; and hoping, in their return, to abridge the wide circuit which the outward course had made, they struck across the unknown interior towards their winter-quarters on the Athabasca lake. This was a tempting, but, perhaps, an imprudent step. With time and means so severely limited, it would probably have been safer to have taken even a considerable circuit, of which they had traced every step, than to have plunged into the absolutely unknown tracts of a region beset with such peculiar perils. The gloomiest anticipations which could have been formed, were much more than fulfilled by the issue. Entangled in a barren and desolate country, intersected by rapid torrents and impassable lakes, they were soon forced to abandon their boat, and all their equipments, and finally reduced to those fearful extremities, which have rendered their story so tragic, and excited so deeply the interest of the British public.

(To be concluded in our next.)

UNPAID LABOUR.—It betrays an equal ignorance of the character of man and the patronage of Governments to imagine that Magistrates are unpaid because they are not paid in metallic currency. Every man that has been at the pains to qualify himself for an office—be that office what it may—and who consents to incur the responsibility attached to the duties of it, expects to be paid, and will be paid, in meal or in malt. You may call this self-interest, but give it what name you please there is no stimulus that can supply the place of it.—*Sedgwick on the Poor Laws.*

EPICURISM.—Fontenelle, the celebrated French author, was particularly fond of asparagus dressed with oil; but he was intimately acquainted with an abbé who loved to eat this delicious vegetable served up with butter. One day the abbé dropped in unexpectedly to dinner, and Fontenelle, who had ordered his favourite dish, with great kindness directed that half should be dressed with oil and the rest with butter. The value of this sacrifice is proved by the sequel of the story. The abbé falling down dead in a fit, Fontenelle, without a moment's delay, darted to the top of the stairs, and exclaimed to the cook—"Dress the whole with oil, the whole with oil, as I told you before."

THE MOTHER OF THE TIGER OF PORTUGAL.—In one of the cells of a Parisian madhouse, is confined a noble Portuguese, whose brother only twelve years of age, was hanged at Coimbra, as the accomplice of a plan to overthrow the existing form of government. "What shall we do with this child?" said the Chief Judge to a woman; "he is only twelve years old." "Twelve years old!" she replied, "so much the better! Let him be hanged forthwith, he will sup with angels. And let his brother, a little older, witness the execution from the scaffold." The woman who thus commanded the cold-blooded murder of a child, was the mother of Don Miguel. The execution took place—and the brother, who witnessed this horrid spectacle, lost his senses. The care and ability of Dr. Blanche restored him to health; but, still pursued by the phantom of his brother's strangled corpse, he became mad a second time.

There is at this moment a lunatic at the Bicêtre, who fancies that, when at breakfast in a garrison town, he inadvertently swallowed a captain of hussars, who had fallen into his glass.

NEW WRITING PAPER.—A new writing paper has just been introduced, which, by means of a chemical preparation which it undergoes, has the singular property of becoming perfectly black whenever it is touched with any fluid. It is only necessary, therefore, to write on this paper with a pen dipped in clean water, to produce a distinct and legible communication.

IRISH ACCOUNTS.—In the Report of the Commissioners for auditing Irish accounts, just printed, there is the following item in the Belfast Ballast-office returns:—"PUMPING WATER out of DRY DOCKS, £89!"

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