

MAN,

A CANADIAN HOME MAGAZINE.

VOL. 8

NOVEMBER, 1885.

No. 1

THE PET OF AN INDIAN QUEEN.*

WHEN the admiral's ship was the government house—when the colony of Newfoundland was “governed from the vessel's deck”—there befell to a colonist, who was an ancestor of mine, an adventure which I shall now relate.

The French having been expelled from the island, it was found necessary to repair old forts and construct new ones, for during those stormy times the worsted party always came back. And so the King commissioned his officers to send a body of men from the capital, the old town of Placentia, which is now a ruin, to the Bay of Exploits, to cut timber. They wended their way through sodden marshes, across dreary stretches of “barrens,” and the tall, brawny Indians, who hated the white man, saw them coming. And the king's party pitched their tents in a dense grove and cut down trees, and built for themselves out of squared logs a large shanty which they called a “tilt.” This was in the autumn of the year, and the clump wherein they built had just burst into a blaze of glory. Saffron-smitten hung the leaves on the alder, and every birch-limb held out to the breeze a hundred little fans of burnished gold. The fir—which the king's men called “vars”—and the pines, and the cedars, and the larch—which they called “juniper”—of all the trees in the forest alone retained their green. From the rowan tree, which they called “dog-wood,” they plucked bunches of waxy vermillion and scarlet berries, and they brought into their tilt the inner bark of the yellow birch, which they called “witch-hazel;” for a decoction made from its bark removed the effect of a witch's charms, and proved a safe-guard against other evil things. But the king's men were not

concerned with the beautiful autumn colors; and they hewed down the logs to build the forts.

It happened that early in December a young officer of the army quartered in Placentia, Edmund C—, was commissioned to go out over the desolate country to examine the progress of the king's work in the forest. Edmund took with him an orderly and two guides to carry his linen and what else was needful in the wilderness. Edmund was tall and comely, his hair was wavy and flaxen with a shimmer of sun and green in it, and it fell over his shoulders as was the custom in those olden days. He had his berth in the shanty, and spent his days shooting willow grouse when he was not where the men were squaring their timber.

On the evening after the first snow-fall, when the supper was over, and all lolled around the huge log-fire smoking their pipes, the foreman of the fort exclaimed in a somewhat loud voice—“Hang those Indians! I saw their footings in the snow about here to-day.” These words that camp was to hear again. So it was resolved that a strict watch should be kept during the night; and in the daytime the men kept close together while they chopped the logs; and against the nearest tree at hand rested a long-barrelled sealing gun, charged with seven “fingers” of seal shot.

And so they worked for many weeks after the night of the first snow-fall and saw naught of the Indians save that now and again a chopper would declare he observed the figure of a man emerge from behind some tree in the distance. But there was no fear in daytime, for the king's men were forty-five strong, their guns were at their elbow, and at night

*This story is true, the facts having been gathered from manuscripts belonging to the Captive Officer, E. C.