

From Heath's Book of Beauty, for 1841.

Winter.--A North American Sketch.

BY MISS POWER.*

NATURE sleeps! cold and death-like is her repose—not Juliet in her living tomb lay purer and paler; there is a hushed, an awful stillness in the wide forests of the west. The earth lies covered with the universal mantle of snow, and the leafless trees uprear their mighty trunks and fling abroad their giant arms in stern and motionless grandeur. There is something in the appearance of leafless trees that gives an idea of stern repose; there is no longer the flutter of gay green leaves, dancing in every breath of summer air, glittering in every gleam of summer sunshine, all youth, and life, and joy. Poor prodigals! the brightness and levity of their young days have passed away: the early frost has withered and faded the dancing leaves, as the cold hand of sorrow destroys the hopes and joys of youth; and the heart, chilled, and hardened, and disappointed, stands like the leafless tree—silent, and bare, and lone. The sun shines, but it is with a cold and wintry beam, like the smile which plays on the lip when the heart is broken. And this is Nature in repose; anon comes a voice from above, and she wakes, wakes in wrath, and fearful is her anger—the mighty winds are let loose and the forest groans, and all is tumult and terror: and thus she rages for a season and then sleeps again. * * * * *

Hark! there is a sound of life in the woods! and yonder some object approaches,—it is a cariboo. Poor creature! it is almost exhausted; wearily and painfully it struggles on through the deep snow, with outstretched neck, lolling tongue, and starting eyeballs: the dogs are close upon it—it can go no further; and, with sudden desperation, it turns and stands at bay, threatening its pursuers. The small, brisk Indian

dogs have neither the strength nor the courage to attack it, but stand round barking and yelping, conscious of being supported by a superior power. A shot is heard—the hunted deer gives one agonised spring, and drops lifeless, and then the Indian comes forward, strips off the skin, and separates the members of the carcass, still warm,—almost quivering with life; and having carefully packed them on his tobogan, he gathers up his hunting knife and rifle, and calling to his dogs, strikes away through the forest towards his home. For miles Tomar walked on, following the tracks made by his own snow-shoes when in pursuit of his game. The sun was now setting, and he saw by the halo that surrounded it, and by the dull grey colour of the sky, that a snow storm was coming on: he was yet far from his wigwam, and he felt hungry and weary. Still he pressed on, though his step was no longer light and firm; and the loaded tobogan, the weight of which appeared at first a mere nothing, now became an intolerable burden. The snow began to descend in small close flakes, which shewed that it would be a heavy fall; and as night approached, the cold became so intense, that Tomar's limbs, numbed and stiffened, almost refused their office. By degrees, his senses became confused; he felt giddy and stupified: still visions of his own hearth, of his children's welcome, crossed his mind, and though dim and indistinct, they urged him on. But this could not last—his strength was rapidly failing—an irresistible feeling of drowsiness crept over him—he no longer felt cold or hungry—only sleepy—very sleepy—and, unable to overcome the sensation, he stretched himself on his cold, cold bed, with a snow wreath for his pillow, and soon he slept—slept the sleep that knows no waking. His spirit passed away to join his fathers, in that Indian paradise where there is no more cold or misery; where no white man comes to oppress the children of the forest.

The tardy morning broke; the bright, cold sun shot his keen rays through the leafless trees, and gleamed brilliantly on

* The authoress of this pretty Sketch is the daughter of Captain Power, and niece to the Countess of Blessington, and resided for some time in Fredericton.