

PRELUDE

HARVEST-TIME was almost come, and the great new land was resting under coverlets of gold. From the rise above the town of Lebanon, there stretched out ungarnered wheat in the ear as far as sight could reach, and the place itself, and the neighbouring town of Manitou on the other side of the Sagalac River were like islands washed by a topaz sea.

Standing upon the Rise, lost in the prospect, was an old, white-haired man in the cassock of a priest, with grey beard reaching nearly to the waist.

For long he surveyed the scene, and his eyes had a rapt look.

At last he spoke aloud :

"There shall be an heap of corn in the earth, high upon the hills ; his fruit shall shake like Libanus, and shall be green in the city like grass upon the earth."

A smile came to his lips—a rare, benevolent smile. He had seen this expanse of teeming life when it was thought to be an alkali desert, fit only to be invaded by the Blackfeet and the Cree and the Blood Indians on a foray for food and furs. Here he had come fifty years before, and had gone West and North into the mountains in the Summer season, when the land was tremulous with light and vibrating to the hoofs of herds of buffalo as they stamped from the hunters ; and also in the Winter time, when frost was master and blizzard and drift its malignant servants.

Even yet his work was not done. In the town of Manitou he still said mass now and then, and heard the sorrows