

Chapter One

with the thronging of many people. The Indians pitched their wigwams on the broad meadows below the bend ; the half-breeds sauntered about, flashing bright teeth and wicked dark eyes at whom it might concern ; the traders gazed stolidly over their little black pipes, and uttered brief sentences through their thick black beards. Everywhere was gay sound—the fiddle, the laugh, the song ; everywhere was gay color—the red sashes of the *voyageurs*, the beaded moccasins and leggings of the *métis*, the capotes of the *brigade*, the variegated costumes of the Crees and Ojibways. Like the wild roses around the edge of the muskegs, this brief flowering of the year passed. Again the nights were long, again the frost crept down from the eternal snow, again the wolves howled across barren wastes.