

When once he could consider himself settled, it might be for a score of years, he very wisely looked about him for a companion and helpmate. It need hardly be explained that he had a very limited range of choice in making his selection. There was no such thing as society in the ordinary sense of the term at the forts. The tide of settlement had not yet touched these continuous wilds which the North-West and Hudson's Bay Fur Companies sought jealously to keep for themselves as a fur preserve, but which were destined to be the home of millions. Beside the employees of the Companies, a few enterprising spirits who ventured to do a little trading and trapping on their own account, and the Indians, whose lodges and wigwams were scattered at wide intervals over the rolling plains, or hidden among the depths of the forests, there was no other human life.

But fortune favoured Donald M'Kenzie and sent him a good wife nevertheless. He had not been long on the lookout when there came to the fort a hardy *voyageur*, having with him his wife and daughter, and no sooner had the factor's eyes fallen upon the latter, than he said to himself with an exultant chuckle, 'Hech, Donald lad! —but she's a braw one. It's doing your best to get her you must be;' and with his customary promptness and resolution he set about the business forthwith.

Donald's enthusiasm was not without good cause, for Virginie Latour possessed no ordinary share of beauty. Her father, Jean Baptiste, as was very usual at that time, had taken him to wife the dusky belle of a Cree encampment, and she had borne him this one child, in