

CHAPTER XLII.

FROM the moment of Marcelle's escape Black John and the Huron had never ceased to bemoan her absence, watching without hope for a sign of her return, picking up bits of news from travellers, going far upon the trail to meet or overtake her, cursing her for her wilfulness, but always resolving some day to have her with them again. The life of the wilderness was replete with tragedies, and had she been slain by her captors—for such in reality the two men considered the Frenchmen to be—it would have been merely one more of the incidents usual in the everyday life of the forest of the red men in times of so much stir and strife.

The season had now arrived when the trail of the hunter would be hard to follow, and the Huron matured his plans accordingly. Like a wise man he did not discuss them with Black John, for the free-trader had long since given himself over to brooding and melancholy. He took his departure silently for the great city of Quebec, where he had never been, and of which he knew nothing beyond hearsay, taking advantage of the absence of Black John amongst the Foxes, who of late had quarrelled openly with the Beavers and threatened by their turmoil to upset his trade. which, by some strange