

MARCELLE

CHAPTER I.

HARD by the trail that from the City of Quebec continued deviously by land and water for a thousand leagues to the Upper Lakes and the regions beyond, and two hundred leagues from the beginning of this great highway, dwelt Black John, an old *coursur-de-bois*. The gain of the great companies under French charters in traffic with the Indians had long been so great that it had tempted many of the French-Canadians to engage in illicit trade, and it was said, too, that some of those high in the authority of the French King were not above violating the ordinances of monopoly which they had sworn to protect. For a few drams of brandy the red man sold the finest fox and beaver skins, and so extensive had the leak become that the outlaws of the forest were under constant condemnation of death by royal decree.

What cared they for death, however, in a country where death lurked behind every bush, or for the law where the vast extent of land and water rendered defiance of its provisions easy. It was in vain, too,