

but at the time I speak of not one person in a thousand had ever heard it. I spent two winters with father, and had a rough but capital time. I went on one shooting or trapping excursion after another, and became quite an expert for a youngster. About the middle of my second December at the fort, father received letters from headquarters which made it necessary to send a messenger to the next post, nearly a hundred miles to the south-west. I no sooner heard of this than I wanted to go. Father objected."

"It's a long tramp," he said, "and you will not likely have any sport either going or coming. You had better not think of it, and I will send Jean Baptiste and François," mentioning two of our most trusted voyageurs.

"I was in no mood to accept his advice, having been inactive for a month, and not seeing any chance to have an outing very soon. There was another reason that influenced me, and that was that the factor in charge of the fort in question, a Montreal man, named Armitage, had taken the somewhat unusual course of bringing his two daughters out with him, both of whom were younger than I.

"You need not think I was in love with the girls, for I was not, and this is not a love story. They were splendid girls, though. Both are married now; and if I am yet a bachelor that has nothing whatever to do with it.

"I think my father more than half suspected why I was so eager to go, for after his first formal protest, he raised no further objection."

"Who will go with you?" he asked.

"Big Joe," I answered, referring to my Indian guide, philosopher, and friend, companion of all my excursions by land or water.

"Of course, but who else?"

"Oh, he'll do. We'll take his dog team, and go through in fine style."

the programme, as represented to father; but I meant to make the outward journey in as near three days as possible, and to allow myself not more than four to come home in, and that would leave me six days for the society of the charming Misses Armitage.

"The snow-shoeing was excellent, and Joe and I tramped along, side by side, the dogs following with the sledge containing our camping kit and provisions. We were about an hour out when I imparted my plan to my companion.

"Joe!" I said, "can we tramp to Fort Armitage in three days?"

"Yes, can. Mebbe if not storm," was the guarded answer.

"Well, let's do it."

"What for so fast?" queried Joe.

"Oh, nothing, only what's the use of loafing along the road."

"Mebbe you wantum see Armitage pretty white squaw?"

"Joe's face was very solemn as he offered this suggestion, but I knew him well enough to understand that the remark was to be considered a joke of the first magnitude, and I laughed accordingly. Joe's one weakness was that most uncommon trait of character in an Indian—a belief that he could make a joke occasionally, and nothing put him in better humor than to have his efforts in that direction acknowledged. So pleased was he with my reception of his remark, that he said—

"Frank, you get in sledge. Joe run ahead of dogs to Armitage in two day mebbe."

"I thanked him and told him I was not in so great a hurry as that, and we dropped the subject. Nevertheless, we made thirty-five miles that day, camping at night in a little thicket of firs. The next day passed without any adventure, and we made progress fully equal to the



I KNEW WHAT WAS COMING.

"You had better take either Jean Baptiste or François," suggested my father; but when I urged that Joe would think this a reflection on his merits, he added—

"Of course, you really don't need another man, except for company, and as you say, he would not be welcome company to Joe."

"We were off as soon as it was daylight next morning, the twelfth of December. We expected to make at least twenty miles a day, so that five days would be spent in going. A day's rest at the fort, would leave us seven days for the homeward journey, so we were reasonably sure of being back for our Christmas dinner. This was

first day's tramp. When we were snug in camp at night, I said—

"This time to-morrow night we will be at Fort Armitage."

"Mebbe snow come," was the discouraging response.

"Nonsense," I said, "there is no sign of a storm."

"Joe made no reply, and we fell asleep, waking at daylight to find the snow falling steadily, though not heavily. The sight of it made me impatient to go on, though Joe advised me against leaving the camp. He insisted that it would snow harder before the day was out, and we could not see our way. I told him we had our compass, and he answered—