

requests for titles to their lands which the half-breeds had sent to Ottawa had been disregarded by careless officials, and Riel, finding the soil ready once again for the seeds of disaffection and disloyalty, boldly raised the standard of rebellion on the 18th of March, 1885. Soon the half-breeds took up arms, and the little groups of white settlers fled in terror to the stations of the mounted police. Many of the Indian tribes also took the



BIG BEAR.

war-path. The most formidable of these was Big Bear, whose reserve was between the mounted police station of Fort Pitt and the little white settlement of Frog Lake. In command of Fort Pitt was Francis Dickens, a son of the great novelist, with a force of about thirty men. Nearer Battleford the Indians were under the leadership of a chief called Poundmaker. Farther west there was danger of a rising among the warlike Blackfeet.

Early in the spring of 1885 all Canada was aroused by the alarming news that the half-breeds or Metis of the Saskatchewan, under Gabriel Dumont, had defeated a detachment of mounted police and volunteers at Duck Lake, near Prince Albert. This was followed by the far more alarming intelligence that Big Bear was on the war-path, and that his braves had massacred the men at Frog Lake, carried off the women and children, and compelled the mounted police to abandon Fort Pitt. Speedily the 90th Rifles were despatched from Winnipeg, and this regiment was joined at Qu'Appelle by a large and well-equipped force under General Middleton. The soldiers were carried the greater part of the way on the newly-constructed Canadian Pacific Railway; and although there were gaps in the road and a long march of some three hundred miles to be taken by the main column after it left the railroad, these untried soldiers hurried forward with