

## The Great Trail Riders' Feast

By Robert Allison Hood

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There are folk who love the mountains but are quite content to thread their way through the forest about their slopes or along the rocky trails that mark them higher up without burning to conquer with rope and ice axe high inaccessible peaks. There are folk, too, by whom the great out-of-doors cannot be enjoyed to the full without the companionship of man's best friend. To many of these the organization of The Trail Riders of the Canadian Rockies came as a piece of news that was almost too good to be true and it was a group of real enthusiasts who gathered on the 17th of July at Takkakaw Falls in the Yoho Valley to have their part in the first Pow Wow, which had been arranged by the capable secretary, Mr. J. Murray Gibbon. East from Ottawa and Montreal and London, England, North from Chicago, Washington and Philadelphia, South from Edmonton and West from Vancouver they came, bearing outfits of divers shapes and colours and duly equipped for the trail.

The writer was borne in ignominiously in an automobile by the fine road that has been made along by the Kicking Horse and up the Yoho ascending at one part by a switchback that is a fine piece of highway making. He had ordered his horse from Field with the idea of riding in as became a proper trail rider but it appeared the animal had been sent on to Takkakaw so there was nothing for it but to accept transportation on four wheels. There were some compensating circumstances, however, for the clouds were now lowering thick about the head of Cathedral Mountain and the rapids of the turbulent Yoho had taken on a sombre and sullen hue that promised ill. By the time that our car swung round into the camp, rain was coming down heavily, and fresh from the softness of the city, one may have had a sneaking relief that the twelve miles of the trip lay behind one rather than before.

The little wooden bungalows grouped in the wide clearing about the larger building which served as an eating lodge and general social centre were picturesque enough amid their green setting, but more so the cluster of white tepees which were to shelter the Trail Riders during their stay. As we drew up, the Secretary was on hand to meet us and quickly led us to the Sundance Lodge, a huge tent which had been gaily painted with divers animals and figures by the stalwart Indian who stood to welcome us by the doorway. From the rain which was now pouring outside, its pictured interior was warm and inviting and here we were duly enrolled in the membership, those of us who could show the required record of fifty miles or more traversed on horseback within the zone of the Rockies laid down in the Constitution, which is a formidable document framed so as to awe the tenderfoot into a state of mind properly humble.

The rest of the day until evening was spent in making the acquaintance of the

other trailrangers. Colonel Moore in a brilliant coat of many colours made a genial host and his efforts were well seconded by Mrs. Moore. Rain continued all afternoon but it did not dampen the good spirits of the gathering which was swelled continually by new arrivals on horseback dripping, indeed, but the reverse of downhearted. Dinner in the big eating tent was a jolly affair and at the big tables red man sat down with white and the dusky faces lent a picturesque touch

of contrast to the scene. After supper, solitary figures in the dusk could be observed furtively repairing from somewhere behind the eating tent to the tepees carrying big bundles in their arms. It was a weird enough sight but it was only the riders taking up their beds in the shape of downy piles of these red C. P. R. blankets, whose softness is like a benediction, to provide against the chill night air of the mountains.

The rain had somewhat abated when at eight o'clock we gathered in Sundance Lodge for the Pow Wow, a goodly company of over two hundred of all nationalities and ages. Some were ranged on benches encircling the tent, some on blocks of wood but the majority squatted Indian fashion on the carpet of spruce boughs, scorning aught that savoured of the luxuries of cities. After the distinguished President, Dr. Walcott, head of the Smithsonian Institute at Washington, had given his opening address, the Secretary read the proposed constitution of the new order and the names of the executive put forward by the nominating committee, which were unanimously adopted. An amendment to the former was passed whereby the requirement of a record of having ridden fifty miles on horseback in the Rockies was modified to permit of the applicant for membership

qualifying by a mileage made on foot by the side of a horse. This it was explained, was to enable any guide who was not in the habit of riding while on the trails, to qualify but it occurs to me that it provides a convenient loophole for the tenderfoot who feels safer off the back of a horse than on to enter this society as a bona fide trail rider without doing violence either to his nerves or to his anatomy. Well, why not? We cannot all be Buffalo Bills and it must needs be a humanizing and ennobling experience for anyone even to lead a horse fifty miles in the mountains.

A song sheet specially prepared for the occasion had been handed round, and, led by Miss Frances James, of Montreal, everyone sang and the tent was soon filled with melody. The "Song of the Yoho," to the tune of the old Gaelic boatman's song, "Fhir a Bhata" was peculiarly appropriate as one heard in the pauses in the program the deep thunder of the waters of Takkakaw in their twelve hundred foot cataract:

"The Falls are roaring down to the river  
The spray is drifting before the breeze:

