

finish—for be he ever so good a hunter and fisherman, he cannot support a moving camp with his rifle and rod, even in a good game country like the northern B.C. trails and ranges. Anyhow, we turned north at the Stuart; made the heart-breaking loop—this river is an erratic S, pronounce it as you will. We did not cache at the mouth of the Stuart, as we were the rear camp and our load was very light—four horses, four men, no extras, the trail had these, as we had discarded every useless article to make a dash of the last hundred miles to Fraser Lake.

THE morning I write of we were in camp six days up the Stuart and living on fish, or no fish; we called it "point." We had found a good meadow for the horses in the bend of the river, lush with grass and sparkling with rime, as the season was getting late and the nights very cold. In a little brawling stream I had found a lot of trout, but the Nechaco had swallowed up my fishing outfit, and the khaki fly, ravelled from the frayed bottom of my trousers, did not tempt the beauties. Pork there was none. Our meals were becoming monotonous. Breakfast—clear, sparkling water and "point" and a pilot biscuit; ditto dinner, ditto supper, unless I could hike faster than the camp and fish for a living by the way. For the first time on many trails, Fritz did not whistle. The Tsimshian men were more silent than ever, if that was possible. Smoking, "ki-nootl" (it literally was; this is the Chinook jargon



A trophy in the shape of a pair of horns.

word for tobacco), I fired up now on a little withered leaf that looked like "kinniknec," the "Ahsamah" of our old eastern guides, the Ojibways. This morning we had a wee bit of snow and a suspicion of ice in the dead water. Our compasses showed the river to be flowing due south, and our maps, corrected up to the first of the then present year, told the same tale, while the lower Nechaco showed west by northwest. "We will not break camp to-day, we must hunt," I announced. So I took Fritz with me and bade the guides ascend the opposite slope in search of goat or sheep, deer or bear, anything with flesh along its ribs. We left water level at daylight, and at noon I was directly above my band of horses, so directly, that had the spur of rock I was leaning out over given way I would have "glided" two thousand feet right kerslap into that bunch of feeding mares. Once we had seen bear, a black chap scuttled away from a half-devoured carcass of a fish on the edge of the lower river. Many tracks of moose and caribou were crossed, we jumped a band of, I think, blacktail, but lost them in the dense cover—so we made a nice, skimpy lunch of one more "pilot"—Fritz called them "round shingler"—and lots upon lots of water. I found some "bear berries."

ALL back at camp at night and not a hair or a feather amongst us all. A gentleman called Swift, in Chicago, had put up a nice little pound of meat some time ago and we divided it, the last one, that night. Less than twenty pounds of "pilots" in camp, no flour, tea or beans, everybody on short allowance, six days off the trail—was it really probable that in the midst of a game country we would have to kill a horse? Off we all set next morning—north and south along the river, bound to make a kill above that game-tracked valley.

Fritz reached the snow line about noon, and I heard his rifle go "tack" in the clear air. My twisted ankle made me nurse my way back to camp. Neither guide brought in meat, so I decided they were "malingering" and made up my mind to strike south



The trout you catch in the Yellowhead are fine, when the sauce is hunger!

next day. Darkness fell and no sign of Fritz. At ten, our camp rule time for stragglers, we fired three shots. No answer. Again at eleven we signalled. Silence everywhere. Those mighty ranges are deathly still after nightfall—save in avalanche time. Early next morning we started over the lad's trail. We passed up through the heavy timber and out onto the dried grass slopes of the "Caribou Range."

We easily tracked him over this and found where he crossed a light snowfall. Then he had walked along the arete, slid down, rested his rifle—these guides are excellent sign readers—and fired. We found the empty case. Then he slid or fell down into the valley below. As we could not get a single footmark on the exposed rock, there seemed no way that mortal man could safely get down that dizzy, piled-up precipice, fully five thousand feet of sheer descent. My ankle forbade it, but both guides started down, and later funk'd it, and I retraced my steps slowly to the camp.

THERE was Fritz, and Daisy, making an excellent meal on toasted goat. It seemed that he had spied an old "billy," and an extremely tough one he proved, airing himself on the tip top of the lower arete. Fritz fired as soon as he could get an aim and the goat sprang up, pawed out into the thin air and plunged a mile down the side of the sheer precipice. Of course Daisy yelped once and started down, and the big boy, Fritz, must needs start after. He told me it was just the worst he ever tried. He did much of it in the perpendicular cracks weather warped in the face of the cliff. Daisy did most of it, backwards, a sign of dangerous descent, and made some nasty falls. When, torn and breathless, they arrived at the foot of the mighty cliff, they found the goat just a mass of broken bones. Fritz said it lifted like a bag. So out came his knife and in an hour both dog and boy were breathless again—this time from overfeeding on broiled goat. Then night fell and he built up his fire higher and slept like the little fat top he is. We are very seldom eaten alive by bears out here—except in magazines.

We ate goat broiled and fried, stewed and roasted, and hiked it back down those six days' trail off the Stuart, and ten days more along the Nechaco, killing deer and bear by the way, to our head camp at Fraser Lake. Those "guides" (?) were as completely lost in that wilderness off the Stuart as any white man I have ever been astray with. We would have been going north yet if I had followed their advice.

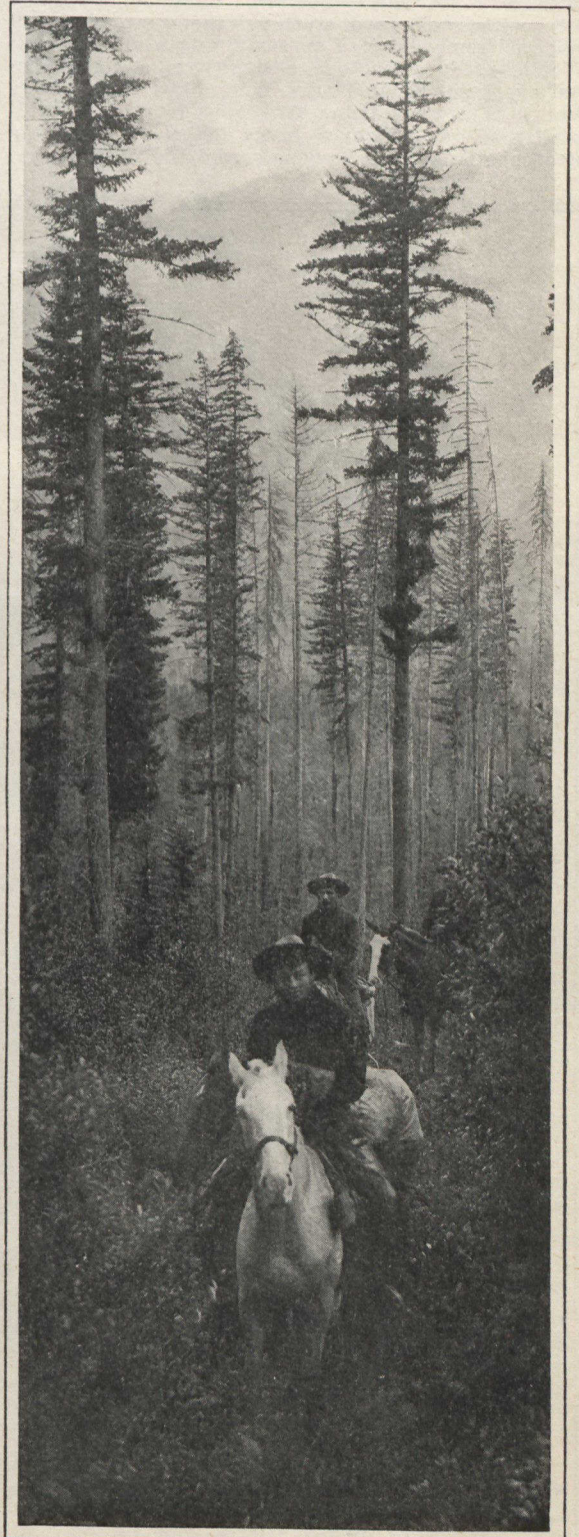
There was one incident in that trip through the Yellowhead Pass that made us healthy, jovial animals pause and consider. Its gloomy effects I can feel now as I write these words, after many years and several thousand miles intervene between me and the Tete Jaune Cache. We were seeking a trail on the banks of a little glacial stream that pours into the Nechaco. It was a very wilderness of tall, sombre pines and flaming autumn maples. The sandy spits bore the arrow-pointed impress of the blacktail, the big pads of the black bears—and sometimes a bigger one still that told a huge grizzly was wandering along this lonely creek. It seemed highly probable that a white man's foot had never entered this scene.

"Look!" called Fritz, "the footmarks of a child!" There, firmly imprinted among the medley of wild animal trails, was the clear mark of a child's naked, stubby foot. I remember we squatted about it and lighted our pipes and held a tobacco council. There were no lodges of the plains Indians so far west. Rarely, very rarely, a coast Indian penetrated so far east. True there were some "river Indians" on the main trail hundreds of miles off. We knocked out the ashes and resumed our work.

Towards nightfall I heard Fritz give my private camp-call—the "COO-eee" of the Marois of New Zealand. I at once plunged off up the little creek that led into the larger stream. Here I found the lad standing, staring at a little rude hut—half-tepee, half cache, bark shack—from it came the wailing calls one hears a panther make. We never carry a weapon on the trail, so I hesitated a moment.

"It's a kiddie crying," whispered Fritz; so we lifted the swinging bark curtain and looked in. We finally made out a couple of dark figures resting on a heap

of fern and vetch. I stepped inside and lifted the smaller one and carried it out to the dim evening light. It was a wee Indian boy, now hushed into silence. We entered the dark shack again and I reached and lightly shook the other figure. It fell back into position in a most wooden manner. Instantly Fritz struck a match—for we were filled with vague alarm. Something uncanny was in this darkness about us. In the flare of the match we saw a dead Indian, dead, without doubt, several days, and the poor little starving child had been cuddling up to this cold form for the heat it never more would give. Later we buried the wanderer and turned the child over to some North Thompson men we met—poor little unknown waif!



Oh, the delight of it, on the trail!