## A Christmas Dinner Amid Hardships of the Trail y Bonnycastle Dale

for the Peace River and later from or to the coast. on the Skeena. We had to raft it a bit as none of our men could speedily make a canoe. O'poots, our head guide, with some old cedar logs and vines, made a really safe raft, even if the bubbles of the take, of the rude camps in bush or snowy swift currents did throw foam over our mountain side, all I can say is, O'poots food spread on our blankets as we dashed down this un-named stream. We had the cameras, a rifle, and a bit of food, enough for ten days for the outfit of six men. It was a bit plain, flour, meatvenison, fish-spawning salmon, or rather a big charr like the deep water trout— "Namay-cush." We had secured important notes and pictures of the native tribes, past and present, numerous good skins and specimens, our fair share of sport, feathered, furred and scaly. Now, in early November, Jack Frost had played us a scurvy trick by sealing up the small streams and nipping the edges of the big ones. We knew just where we could strike our cached canoes, but the Skeena so dangerous that O'poots went one was two hundred miles west, and there was a big rock about one hundred yards ahead of the raft, a deep sluicing current, only a pole for an oar and others for pushing with; they snapped like pipestems when the Thompson River men tried to fend her off. Up, up! she went, there was a sickening rolling motion, a rending grating sound, a gurgling of waters, a snapping of stout vines and

ADDIE and I some years ago strapped on his back, setting the pace were working sou'east out of towards the distant R.R. Surveyors' the Peace River Block, aiming camps we knew were working through

Of the scrambling up those dreary slopes, living on fish and venison with never a grain of flour or salt, of the desperate raft trips we were forced to acted a born leader, Laddie laughed away the hardships and I became a sort of humble camp follower waited on by two kind hosts. Suppers of old dried berries, breakfasts of lean, so lean when we needed fat, venison (for a few days we fairly swam in fat as the guide walked smack into a black bear on the wild animal trail we were following, and Laddie threw up the 22 and put six bullets in various parts of the poor beast's writhing carcase). Unfortunately for transporting the bear meat we had lately crossed the divide and the going was simply a struggle for life. The skin wrappings over our torn boots were whole day almost barefooted where much snow was to be met. However, we finally met a travelling camp of Thompson Indians and traded a few of our pitifully scarce duds and odds and ends from our pockets for a few much needed things. Later when an empty food bag and the last shell fired sent us to rest uneasily under our brush lean-to we were awakened by the caterwauling of a panther, and in the raft was but a tossing drive of logs. answer to it sounded the ludicrous braying



A B.C. river scene-Indians with grizly bear carcass and skin.

Instantly we were swept into the shallows, each laden man hugging a log for dear life. I scrambled ashore with the big camera safe in its waterproof cover and Laddie tucked under my left arm, he in turn had a camera and a small rifle, but food, negatives, notebooks, blankets, all were

sweeping down stream far ahead.

Some hours later when we were all dried out before an immense fire we took stock of the few bits of things we had snatched out of the swirling waters; and, after many confabs, and much gesticulation, the three Thompson River men decided to cross over to the Parsnip River and raft or canoe down it towards home as the circumstances decided. We divided the matches in my camera match case with them, gave them fair half of the scanty bits of food we had salvaged, made them to thoroughly understand that their wages would be sent from Prince Rupert—if we ever got there bade them good-bye sorrowfully, watched them plunge off into the cold crackling woods with only one rifle and a few 44's among them, while all we had was our 22 Special and one box of 50, and I remember it was only a partly filled box at that. O'poots promptly took the leadership of us three, as naturally and kindly and firmly as if he had us hired or we were children. These West Coast Kwakiutls are strange people, make them your servants and they obey thoroughly without any offer of thinking out a thing for themselves, literally doing exactly as they are told, yet here, was the usually stupid O'poots in my place in front, with my rifle in his hand and my camera

of a jackass, and later the neighing of some horses. We had gone sadly to sleep within a mile of a big surveying party and a rude trail was now open to us right down to Hazelton. We were given each a pair of old comfortable shoes. I bought an older pack animal, to wit the ancient brayer of the night before, a brindled Jack that looked like a cross between a Zebra and a solemn muley cow, but laden with purchased supplies it was a sight to cheer our hearts and lightened our tired feet, even if a rough uncertain trail and a wild river lay between us and the coast.

We ran into another native camp where the medicine man was "curing" a native woman. In the first place he told the hunters gathered about him that she was a victim of witchcraft, here he looked slowly around to find the evil one who had charmed away the health of this poor ragged squaw and, because I had offered her a few drops of a sleeping mixture to make her forget her ulcer tormented body, he did me the honor to plainly intimate that I was old Nick himself (see the jealousy that always exists between medical men). He edged close to me intending to spit upon me so to thus have power over me, but I blew such a volume of smoke into his face that he burst out coughing instead, and Laddie started the laugh that soon became general. But this thin shanked old witch doctor took his goodly potion, dried ground frog and salt water, and drank it himself, then this "shaman," as they call them, started on an ancient (Continued on Page 38)

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