SHIKAR

PUBLISHED BY

CONSTABLE & CO LIMITED

10-12 ORANGE STREET

LONDON W.C. 2

India . Central Europe.
Scandinavia.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Bombay	*B. I. Building, Nicol Road*
Calcutta	*30, E. Chowringhee Road*
Madras	*Kardyl Building, Mount Road*
Leipzig	*Barthels Hof, Markt 8*
Copenhagen	*St. Kongensgade 40 H*

Canada

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA LTD

Toronto	*St. Martin's House, Bond Street*

THE BIG BHARAL.

Frontispiece.

SHIKAR

BEING TALES
TOLD BY
A SPORTSMAN IN INDIA

LIEUT.-COLONEL C. H. STOCKLEY
D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., F.R.G.S., F.Z.S.

ILLUSTRATED

THE OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, MADRAS
1928

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

BIG GAME SHOOTING IN THE INDIAN EMPIRE. Demy 8vo. Fully illustrated. 18s. net.

A fascinating book.—*Cavalry Journal.*

Every Mess should have a copy of this book . . . gives estimates of the expenditure likely to be involved in a month's shooting trip.—*The Fighting Forces.*

This admirable introduction to Indian big game shooting is a model of compression. It covers the whole field, yet nothing essential is omitted.—*The New Statesman.*

One of the few books to give a general survey of the large fauna of India . . . it has the quality of a work of science in its attitude of detached observation.—*The Times.*

Before all things a practical book.—*The Spectator.*

Printed in Great Britain by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh.*

CONTENTS

		PAGE
1.	The Road There	1
2.	Paristan	18
3.	Nilgiri Tahr	55
4.	Tsine	70
5.	Luck	85
6.	Markhor (Patriarch of the Hills)	97
7.	A Mixed Bag	111
8.	The Tyrant	119
9.	Sind Ibex	135
10.	Lesser Kudu	156
11.	Quaint Beasts and Queer Habits	170
12.	Shikaris	183

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

The Big Bharal	*Frontispiece*
	FACING PAGE
A Pool in the Jungle	4
A Forest Stream	4
On the Irrawaddi	8
A Crash with a Mail Tonga	8
Crossing the Shyok on a Log "Zak"	10
Fording a Tibetan Stream at 15,000 ft.	10
At the Top of the Pass	24
The Staff make "Pullahs"	24
A Rope Bridge, Chenab Valley	28
A Notched Pole—Part of the Road	36
Chenab Gorge below Kishtwar Town. The Home of Goural	38
The Mouth of the Kijar Nullah	42
A Goural in the Snow	48
Two of the Tahr shot in Kijar	48
Tahr Ground, in the Nilgiris	58
The Mist sweeps up the Valley	58
The Last Camp	68
The "Saddleback"	68
A Pool in the Forest	72
The Head comes Home	82
Result of an Evening's Fishing on the Indus about 30 miles above Leh	88
The 3000 ft. Cliff where the Patriarch was killed	100
The Dragon's Nostrils	100

FACING PAGE

Saikal with the Patriarch's Head 106
The Crest of the Range 106
A Village Tank 114
Part of the Bag 114
The Tyrant's Home { Spring / Winter } 122
The Tyrant 132
A Gap in the Outer Hills 154
The Day's Bag 154
Lesser Kudu Ground. With a Wart Hog in the Middle Distance 158
Lesser Kudu. The Bull 162
Punjab Mussulman of Murree Hills with Goural Heads 184
A Rajput Shikari 184

THE ROAD THERE

It is spring; not the English spring with its cool breezes, streaming furrows, and ragged, wind-torn clouds; but the Indian spring, which heralds the fierce heat of summer with days already uncomfortably warm, and the departure northward of the wild duck; warning us that the time has come to put away the shot-gun, and take out the rifle and the rod for a trip to mountain, forest or stream.

There is a thrill even in the journey from bungalow to station, while the wait on the platform is passed in anxiety lest some indispensable article of baggage be left behind, or a chit arrive from the adjutant to say that our leave is cancelled. It is not till the train bears us away that the pleasure of imagining the great bag we are going to make can be enjoyed to the full: imaginings, I regret to say, seldom fulfilled in their entirety.

The railway journey as a rule holds more discomfort than incident. We clank across a great plain, through fields, past mud-walled villages; rumble over a bridge of many arches spanning a wide sandy riverbed, the water reduced to a shallow flow, filling but one-fifth of the width between the banks. Occasionally a rocky thorn-clad hill, capped by a small white temple, stands out above the general dead level, or a long line of pepul and banyan trees proclaims the presence of

a shady road. At every wayside station third-class passengers descend, and as the train leaves we see them marching, bundle on head, towards the empty horizon. Our hair and eyes and ears are full of cinders, and our clothes but dusty ruins when we finally emerge, crumpled but thankful for discomforts past, and full of hope for joys to come, at the point where we are to leave civilisation and its works behind and the true pleasures of journeying begin.

At times it is a tonga, with jibbing ponies and jangling bar, which rattles us over the first stages of the road journey; and I have heard people complain of the discomforts endured, as if they had gone through an expedition to the North Pole. But for me, the dust, the stiffness of limb consequent on the cramped position of one's legs, and the culinary atrocities presented under the guise of food by the khansamahs of the wayside bungalows, are all amply compensated by the continual change of scene, the increasing purity and coolness of the air, whether of hill or jungle, and the elation due to the knowledge that every mile covered brings us so much nearer the first shot or cast of the trip.

But it is not until we begin "padding the hoof" over jungle road or mountain path that we sense the full joys of wandering free.

The first time a barking-deer scuttles off the weed-grown cart track, as we leave the forest hut in the cool of the morning with the bullock carts squealing behind us; or a monal, like a blue and orange meteor, hurtles, piping shrilly, over our slowly climbing string of coolis, gives a thrill which stirs the blood and quickens every sense to a fuller appreciation of surrounding beauties; giving a zest to life and a certainty that it has no better combination to offer than rude health, wild country and a prospect of good sport.

As we get farther on, the "bhonk" of a sambhar doe, preceding her crashing flight through the roadside jungle, or the mournful whistle of a snow cock, perched on some commanding rock high up the mountain-side above the tree line, tell us, clearer than any shikari can, that we are nearing the home of stag or ibex.

The ordinary everyday incidents of the march belong to a different world to that of city and cantonment. The troop of monkeys hurling themselves with chatter and crash across the gap in the forest caused by the road; the marmot whistling as he sits sentry-wise at the mouth of his hole, or the herds of cattle and sheep pressing up into the hills to graze greedily on the sweet grass, which swiftly succeeds the melting of the snows.

But perhaps it is the jungle sounds which convey the clearest message of progress in the right direction. The day's march done, we sit outside tent or forest bungalow, and as the light dies the birds come trooping home to roost. Flight after flight of green parrots whirl screaming by; doves dive suddenly into the recesses of a giant mango tree, give a contented "roo-coo-roo", and then fall silent: clouds of shrilly-clamorous jowari birds squabble furiously for places in favourite trees, as they fly in from the fields; their noise ceasing as the light fades. Then, as dusk swiftly turns to night and the flying foxes flap in long strings across the darkening sky, there comes a soft "wuff" of feathers as a great eagle owl alights on the dead limb of a giant cotton tree and peers eagerly earthwards for some too rashly venturing beastie that may dare to cross the open. Slight rustlings of unknown origin increase among the dead leaves, and, all of a sudden, a barking-deer shivers the quiet in warning the world at large that a leopard is prowling near.

The howl of a jackal rends the night, the deep snarling cry of a peevish tiger sends a thrill down the spine, and the rising night breeze bears to us the distant trumpeting of wild elephants.

But if camp be in the higher hills the sounds are fewer and of larger origin. For with the last glow of sunset comes the occasional roar of an avalanche till the night frost hardens the snow once again ; and then the silence is only broken by the distant thunder of a waterfall, the full-throated murmur of a river far below, the babble of a snow-fed brook, or the rush of the wind through great empty spaces. Of animal sounds there are hardly any. If camped on the great Tibetan plateau, the howl of a lonely wolf will but seem to intensify the silence ; for night prowlers are scarce in the mountains and do not advertise their presence by their voices.

To me there is no sound so comforting or welcome to the ear as that usually heard for the first time on a September night in Northern India. Many a year I have sat in the open after dinner, and from the starlit heavens has come a musical clamour of loud clear cries, while across the moon has passed a long string of great-winged birds ; then I have given thanks that the grey cranes are come, and the hot weather is over and done with.

Our road to the jungle usually begins by traversing a plain, on either side of it fields in which whirling dust-devils suddenly arise, career madly for a while, then collapse in floating debris of straws and dead leaves, which gradually subsides to earth again. The fields stretch unbroken, except for scattered mango groves, to a horizon empty except in the direction in which we travel, where a long dark line denotes the edge of the forest, or blue shadows the distant hills which are our

A POOL IN THE JUNGLE.

A FOREST STREAM.

To face page 4.

goal. As we progress the road passes over undulating country, trees flank it and cultivated lands are fewer, scrub jungle taking their place. Then the trees rank closer, and are of larger growth ; clumps of bamboo appear, first singly, then in groves and continuous stretches, bright shafts of sunlight patterning the shadowed earth beneath their feathery tops. A glint of water shines through the tree-trunks and a rocky river-bed comes into view ; a crystal clear stream hurrying down its centre falls gurgling into deep pools of limpid purity. The grades become steeper, and in places we look down on the tree-tops. Great black and white hornbills flap clumsily across the valleys, and a flash as of burnished metal proclaims the passing of a golden-backed woodpecker, while from under the overhanging banks of every trickling rill comes the cheery tuneless song of the Whistling Schoolboy. Finally we reach our camping ground under the shade of some ancient trees ; or a forest hut set in a clearing walled about with every shade of green, splashed here and there by the vivid scarlet of the Flame of the Forest.

But very different is the journey to the Himalayas. As we leave the plains the foothills show bare and rocky, only the easier slopes being clotted with a tangle of thorny scrub and scattered babuls. As we mount higher pines appear in increasing numbers, wild pomegranates show clusters of scarlet blossom, and apricot trees shower pink and white petals on the dust of the highway. Chikor hurry off the path or call persistently from the top of some great grey boulder, while now and then, like a white rocket-stick falling earthward, a paradise flycatcher displays his half-yard of tail to his enamoured mate. At intervals small waterfalls sprinkle the road with flying drops, and on every ridge we top

the breeze blows cooler and the gleaming rampart of the snows stands out clearer and more beautiful. High up the hill-side, a cluster of flat-roofed, mud-walled huts above tiny terraced fields, a village seems to cling in doubtful safety. And indeed I once camped opposite such an one with a river thundering between us ; and in the evening a great storm arose, lasting throughout the night, so that my tent was flooded though pitched on rising ground. In the morning, of the village opposite but half the houses still stood ; while, where the fields had been, instead of fruitful soil, glistened wet, naked and unprofitable rock ; a brown smear of mud which had been fields, bestrewn with beams which had been houses, marking the path of ruin to the river below.

As we penetrate further into the mountains, villages are only to be found in sheltered valleys, and walnut trees thrive amongst the houses and on the hill-sides ; while all around apple and pear, apricot, cherry and peach show a glorious wealth of blossom. In many villages the houses are built of wood and are of two stories ; the upper for mankind, the lower for the beasts. For the snow will be several feet deep at times in winter, and every autumn each pollard willow in the fields will carry a heavy stack of its own leaves, or hay, or straw, wherewith to feed the kine, huddled together in darkness and in filth till the melting of the snow allow them forth again.

We journey on between hills densely clothed with deodar and pine, mingled with silvery birch and broad-leaved walnut. Patches of snow appear in sheltered places, and at times we clamber over a great jumble of earth and ice, boulders and broken trees, the debris of an avalanche. The stream beside which we walk has fewer quiet stretches, foams furiously over obstruct-

ing rocks, and emerges from under an arch of snow to leap hurriedly down a long rapid in a chaos of broken water. Pine-fringed precipices overhang the path, then, at a turn in the valley, a great snow-capped cone suddenly towers over us, and we recognise a peak last seen from a camp now fifty miles behind us.

We mount higher, and again the trees begin to thin. Large stretches of open mountain-side, broken by granite cliffs and strewn with boulders, part the forest; while clumps of rhododendron patch the hill-tops, and groups of graceful birch shiver in the cold breeze. We walk more frequently on snow till finally it is all around us, and we camp on the hither side of a pass, frowned on all around by peak and glacier, snow and rock and ice.

Half-way between midnight and dawn we set out and slowly climb the frozen slopes; till, by the time it is light, we are three parts of the way up, and the rising sun greets us on the summit as we gaze eagerly at the country of our hopes. It may be bare and treeless, rough and inhospitable, but it is the home of markhor and ibex, shapoo and burhel, while just beyond those distant mountains is the beginning of the great Tibetan plateau, where there are lakes 15,000 feet above the sea, where no tree exists, and the *Ovis ammon*, mightiest of sheep, lives and roams with only the weather and the wolves as enemies; until a wandering sportsman comes in quest of a pair of massive forty-inch horns to hang on his study wall.

Once we have crossed the pass our road may offer many difficulties and dangers. At times it is carried on crazy platforms built out on rotten props stuck insecurely into holes in the face of a cliff: at others we climb by ladders of loose stones which fill some vertical fissure and are only kept in place by their own weight,

so that as one nears the top of the structure it seems to need the combined skill of a steeplejack and a wire-walker to avoid precipitating the whole thing in a ruin involving yourself and others with you.

But it is the rivers that trouble one most. Native bridges are of several kinds in the Himalayas, and few of them do more than just attain their purpose of providing a possible means of crossing without over-consideration of its safety. There is the cantilever bridge, whose overlapping poles are weighted at the shore end with piled boulders from the river-bed, the centre gap being spanned by springy poplar trunks, which dance merrily under the traveller's feet. Then there is the rope bridge or "jhula" of many lengths and conditions of insecurity. It is usually made of twisted birch twigs, and has a foot-rope and two hand-ropes joined to the foot-rope by thin vertical strands. The hand-ropes are kept apart by sticks thrust transversely between them every few yards, and over these the traveller has to step. The whole is fastened to a heavy upright log frame, over the top bar of which the hand-ropes pass, the foot-rope being anchored to the lower bar. These bridges are any length from 30 feet to 300, and the longer ones swing and kick in the wind in a fashion most alarming to the novice. Sometimes the hand-ropes have sagged almost to the level of the foot-rope, and one has to cross in a crouching attitude. Once, when I was in the middle of a long one in company with my shikari, the bridge gave a sudden jump and the whole of the transverse sticks flew out, so that the hand-ropes came together and clipped us firmly by the ribs. Progress was only possible by one of us turning sideways and parting the ropes by pushing away with both hands (for the ropes are heavy and 5 or 6 inches in diameter), thus the other could progress a yard or two,

ON THE IRRAWADDI.

A CRASH WITH A MAIL TONGA.

To face page 8.

and then do the same, so that we gradually reached the end. We then had to cut fresh sticks and climb out again to fix them, so that the bridge might be ready for the coolis, who were a couple of hours behind us.

A friend of mine once crossed one of these bridges with his shikari. Two of his coolis followed and crossed in safety with their loads. After them followed two more coolis ; and when these latter reached the middle the ropes parted, so that they fell into the river below and were never seen again.

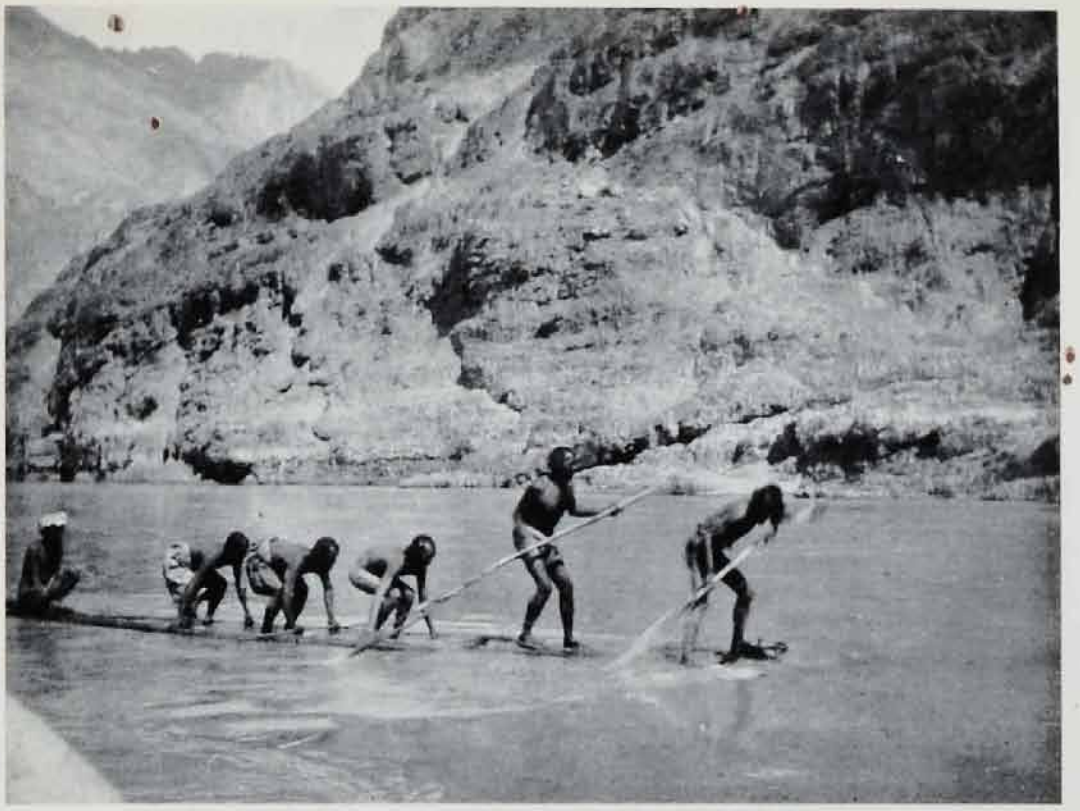
As a rule the fords are the most dangerous, while the ferries provide the most amusement. Of the latter I have cheerful memories of crossing the Indus, on a raft of inflated skins, at its junction with the Shyok. Of the four ferrymen, two were rowers, and two were blowers, for the skins leaked badly. Finally we reached the far bank with everything awash, and both rowers and blowers exhausted with their efforts. Then, a hundred miles up the Shyok, I ferried across on a raft made of five small poplar poles tied together, the oars being forked sticks. The raft took two loads or one man at a crossing, in addition to the rowers, and was almost entirely under water throughout the trip ; so it took repeated journeys and nearly all day to transport my outfit across the river. The Baltis were tremendously excited over the whole business, and argument ran so high that my wait was several times enlivened by a grand scragging match between two of these usually most peaceable people. One of the last two loads to cross was a fine old ram, who accompanied me as walking mutton. He was tied down to the raft, but as it started he somehow got turned on his back, and throughout the voyage he " ran " vigorously with his legs in the air, and " baa'd " unceasingly, to the great delight of the watching Baltis.

Of fords I have no good word to say. I have twice been nearly drowned, and twice seen a man drowned in one. In the hills the current is always swift, the water cold, and the bottom treacherous. The first hill ford I ever tackled was across the Shyok some twenty miles below its junction with the Nubra. The glacier-fed water was so cold that, by the time I reached the far side, I hardly knew whether I had any legs or not. I have forded the Indus opposite Leh on July 1 (an unusually late date), and again near its entrance into British territory, where it flows wide and shallow between banks covered with green turf.

Fording the Tsarap river in Lahoul produced one of the quaintest sights I have seen. The water was thigh-deep and tremendously swift, so we formed the baggage yaks into line, with the heaviest yak and myself at the upper end; then, each taking hold of a yak's tail, the whole caravan plunged in and struggled across to the further shore in safety; though my bearer was swept off his feet and grabbed just in time by the man next below him in the line.

Of only one spring journey to my shooting ground have I consistently unpleasant recollections.

I was going up to Kishtwar in March, and, in order to avoid the snowy passes from the Kashmir valley, I determined to travel from Jammu and up the Chenab valley. I arrived at Jammu in pouring rain to find the 1911 census going on, and was counted three times; in the train, on leaving the station, and at the dak bungalow. It was quite useless assuring the second and third enumerators that I had already been counted; they were much too keen on increasing their bag. It took me two days and several personal visits to the native officials concerned to extract the permit which the Kashmir State considers necessary in the case of



CROSSING THE SHYOK ON A LOG "ZAK"

FORDING A TIBETAN STREAM AT 15,000 FT.

To face page 10.

the particular route I wished to use, and for which I had written two months previously. The 12th of March saw me set forth with my orderly and bearer in three tum-tums containing my kit, having sent on my shikari and camp servants by a short cut across the hills to Udhampur, a tahsil town about forty-three miles by driving road from Jammu, but ten miles nearer by the way they were to go. These particular tum-tums (an Anglo-Indian generic term for any two-wheeled trap) resembled fore-and-aft governess carts, and were in the last stage of dilapidation and ruin, therein matching the steeds which drew them, and the harness which united them in one decrepit whole.

Twenty-two miles over a most indifferent road in cloudy weather brought us to a small dak bungalow, whence we departed in a slight drizzle on the following morning, that of March 13; mark the fatal number. About 2 o'clock it began to rain like—well, like it can rain in the Himalayas, and we were still eight and a half miles from Udhampur. For we had been delayed by various accidents, such as the breaking of the string which held the harness together, or a tyre parting company with its wheel. We also found ourselves confronted by a muddy torrent some forty yards in width, and about four feet in depth at the point where the road crossed it. We tried twice and then gave up, nearly losing a pony and tum-tum complete, so I decided to bivouac in an empty hut by the roadside.

Then some evil spirit prompted my bearer to ask the tum-tum drivers if they knew of any short cut by which I might reach Udhampur on foot. One of them said that he knew a way by which it was under four miles to the dak bungalow at which my shikari should be awaiting me. I inquired if there were any other streams to cross, and he said that there was only a

small one close to Udhampur. The hut leaked like a sieve, the floor was fast becoming a morass, and a fire seemed impossible ; so I decided to take the driver as guide and push on in order to save a day by completing arrangements with the tahsildar for coolis to Batoti, two marches further on, before the arrival of my kit.

We started off. First we forded the stream which had held up the tum-tums, at a point 200 yards above the road, where it was wider and shallower, but still hip-deep. Then we climbed the opposite ridge in blinding rain and tramped steadily for an hour until we reached a torrent some twenty yards in width. I asked my guide if this was the stream to which he had referred, but he said that it was a little one which he had forgotten ; all the same it was waist-high, and we had considerable difficulty in crossing. Three-quarters of an hour later, as I was thinking that the driver's four miles were expanding a good bit, the rain ceased and the setting sun peeped out for a few minutes, as we debouched into a broad flat valley with Udhampur showing a mile and a half away on the further side of it. We plodded through a muddy village and, a few hundred yards beyond it, came to a roaring flood, sixty yards from bank to bank. My guide plunged boldly in, and I retrieved him with difficulty by the aid of my cane. I asked him if this was the usual crossing place, and he replied in an aggrieved tone of voice that it was, and that there ought not to be more than a foot of water. On further inquiry I gathered that the only previous occasion on which he had come that way was during the month of June. We tried again higher up, my companion volunteering and hanging on to the end of my stick ; a fortunate precaution, as he immediately disappeared under water, and I hauled him back gasping like a fish. We wandered

further up still, and found a spot that just looked possible. Here the river was eighty yards wide and divided into two at the head of a small stony island, sparsely covered with herbage. We waded in. The water rose higher and higher, till it reached my chest; but still we progressed and it became no deeper. I had arrived opposite the island when I found myself amongst large boulders: my foot slipped into a hole and in a moment I was swimming, but dropped down with the current and scrambled out on to the island into temporary safety. As I rose to my feet I saw my guide swept past me like a cork down the farther channel, caught in the swirl round a big rock, and cast up like a bit of driftwood on the stones of the far bank, apparently in a bad way. It was obviously up to me to go to his assistance; so, seeking the least unpleasant-looking place and leaning well up into the current, I began to fight my way across. I got half-way before the inevitable slip came and I was swept away. Now I was clad in a "coat, warm British", thick tweed suit with underclothes to match, and had heavy nailed marching boots on my feet: not at all a suitable costume for swimming in a ten-knot current. The first rock I met I tried to fend myself off with my hands, but in spite of that my chest thudded on to it, the watch in my breast pocket being smashed to smithereens, and I was flung clean over the obstacle, like doing a "handspring" over the horse in a gymnasium; but I was three yards nearer the shore. Ten yards lower down I grabbed a rock with my left hand, and was swung round it and torn away again with my third and fourth fingers dislocated, but now I was only five yards from safety. I dropped my feet to feel for the bottom, got a whang on the chin from a boulder, secured a momentary foothold, floundered once or

twice, barking my shins again, and then staggered out on to the bank, bruised and battered, but with no serious damage done. I pulled my fingers straight and went to my guide, who, after I had tilted some of the water out of him, seemed more frightened than hurt, but quite determined to die. By brutal methods I convinced him that his immediate business was to keep alive and lead me to the dak bungalow. I squelched behind him in the gathering darkness until the usual sealed-pattern edifice came in sight, and we both cheered up immensely. But our joy was short lived, for the bungalow was locked, and not a soul to be found anywhere near it : there was nothing to be done but to push on to the tahsil. Just as we got to the town we came to another stream, and I nearly burst into tears ; but it turned out to be only 18 inches deep, so we soon splashed through. We arrived at a lighted shop, whose occupants gazed at us as if we were djinns or spirits and directed us to the tahsil building. At last we reached it, and the tahsildar, blessings be on his name (which I have forgotten), came out to us. He held up his hands in horror and amazement—for I was dripping wet and my face was covered with blood from a cut on my forehead—and then acted the good Samaritan. He gave me two great warm blankets and lit an enormous fire in a clean dry outhouse, and by it my clothes steamed while I, wrapped in the blankets, toasted myself on a charpoy. While I told my tale he plied me with quantities of hot milk freely laced with arrack, and numerous boiled eggs, every now and then praising heaven for my preservation ; then, seeing my eyes begin to close, he left me, having first ordered two men to watch by my door and see that I was not disturbed till I should call.

Ten hours later I woke, bruised and sore in several

places, but still fit to do a long day's march, thanks to my kindly host, who had also extended his hospitality to my guide. A large tumbler of hot milk, two fresh chupattis, and I was ready to start to find out what had happened to my kit and my shikari. As I left the gate the last arrived. He had got to the dak bungalow the previous morning; then, finding the river steadily rising, had recrossed in the belief that I would be held up on the far side, and had been waiting in the very village through which we had passed. Here he was suddenly roused by a man rushing in to say that a sahib and a native had entered the river together and been drowned; for he had seen us go in above the island, which had hidden our eventual emergence in the gathering darkness. Since then most of the village had been out looking for the bodies, and hearing that there was a strange sahib in Udhampur, he had come up to enlist my help in the search for my own corpse.

He said that the river was nearly two feet lower than it had been the previous evening, and that he had forded it, though with difficulty, at the usual crossing place.

We walked out of the town in the bright sunshine of a glorious day, and sat on a spur commanding a view of a distant bend of the road to watch for the tum-tums. A furlong below was the ford, and while I lazed in the warmth two Kashmiris came in sight and began to cross. The water was scarcely up to their hips but they were making heavy weather of it, when suddenly the man behind slipped and fell, and—there was only one man where there had been two. I ran down and scrambled out to a big rock commanding a deep pool some forty yards below the ford; but there was nothing to be seen and nothing to be done. The survivor ran aimlessly up and down the bank weeping

and wringing his hands, till finally he became exhausted and sat down on a ledge above the stream gazing hopelessly into the racing, turbid water. When I left two days later he was still there, refusing to come away or to eat any food. He said that they were brothers who had been working at Sialkot throughout the winter and were returning home with all their savings, which the other had been carrying; some three hundred rupees in all. Now he was penniless, and his brother was dead; all in a few seconds on a fine day in spring.

An hour later the tum-tums hove in sight, and I walked down to meet them. I would not allow them to attempt the crossing, but made them drive up-river through the fields to the point above the island where I had crossed the previous evening. Here we portaged the kit across, the water only being half-way up the men's thighs, and carried it to the dak bungalow.

The remainder of that day and the next I rested, except for a wander up the river with a scatter-gun which produced half-a-dozen snipe and a few green plover.

On the 16th I set forth again, with coolis provided by my friend the tahsildar, for the next two marches to Batoti; at which point I would enter the Chenab valley and thenceforward change coolis at every march.

We had covered two-thirds of the day's march when it began to rain again, and it continued through most of the night. Next morning we struggled over five miles of muddy track and through two hill torrents with great difficulty; nearly losing one of my camp servants in one, and finally taking refuge in a house in Chineni village. The following day was fine and we crossed the pass to Batoti, mostly through soft snow, finding the next house there a morass with half the roof fallen in, and eventually occupying a half-built,

windowless, doorless hut designed for the eventual residence of the Silk Department officer. Here we remained two days while it snowed hard. On the third day we obtained some coolis and got on the road again, till finally, on March 26, we camped on the Kishtwar plateau after a contest with landslides, rain and snow, such as I hope I never have to repeat.

It was on this journey that I came across a curious point of dispute. A big landslide had brought down the entire estate of one cultivator, so that his house rested against the back-door of the man next below him on the hill-side and his fields covered the other's. Then arose much argument. The man from above said that he and his belongings had been moved by the hand of God, and that his house and fields had merely shifted their site and were still his to inhabit and cultivate. The original owner of the site maintained that the soil and the house with it were as much a gift from heaven as a shower of rain, and that that particular position on the hill-side belonged to him, with the appurtenances thereof, including the house and fields of the new arrival. The matter was to go before the law-courts, and it looked as if the case were likely to stand much argument, and the costs leave little for either disputant, before the matter were finally settled.

Yet, in spite of all difficulties, dangers and discomforts, and often because of them, the journey to the shooting-grounds is one to be looked forward to by any man who has in him that love of new places and fresh experiences which makes us the greatest race of explorers and pioneers in the world. From being too highly domesticated, good Lord, preserve us!

PARISTAN

In the days which now seem so long ago, when soldiers still hoped for an occasional little war and India was a fit country to live in, I was granted two months' leave at the end of March, and decided to spend it in the Chenab valley, where that river flows through Kishtwar in Eastern Kashmir.

The Chenab rises on each side of the Baralacha pass in Northern Lahoul ; for the Chandra flows east and the Bhaga south from the wind-swept desolation of its 16,000-feet summit. Then, a hundred miles to the south, the two join and form the Chandra Bhaga, the name by which the Chenab is known until it leaves the hills, two hundred miles further on, to water the rich plains of the Punjab, no longer a turbulent rock-torn torrent. The man who only knows it where its flood rages and frets between its prisoning cliffs, would hardly admit that it can be the same river which he crosses in the train at Wazirabad.

There, in the dry season, it is a placid shallow trickle, most of whose water has been taken by the canal engineers to make the wheat and millet and sugar-cane grow to the enrichment of the Sikh and Jat cultivators, who now live in fat and smiling plenty where, not thirty years ago, was an arid wilderness of thorn and sun-baked earth.

For the first hundred miles of the river's course the

mountains on either side are naked giants, clouds and snow their only covering. Then scattered trees begin to appear in increasing numbers, until, by the time it reaches the border of Chamba State, its left bank is densely clothed with forests of pine and birch ; while the north side, though not so well clad, is still decently covered. The more wonderful features of its wonder-inspiring course are the stupendous cliffs at Gandla, 8000 feet from water-worn base to snow-streaked top, and Triloknath, a resting-place of Buddha, with the prayer-flags fluttering on its shrine. Then comes the twenty-foot-wide gorge at Tindi, through which the river boils, bridged by a couple of springy planks without a helping hand-rail. After this the pathway traverses precipices which bombard the traveller after rain with great stones, which bound down the cliffs with resounding crashes and end with a sullen plunge in the river below. Further on the traveller comes to the slanting rope-bridge of Sauch and the fruit orchards of Kilar, and so through Chamba State into the Padar portion of the Kishtwar District of Kashmir, and the country of my present expedition.

Kishtwar is no land for weaklings. Hard of access, to reach it a 12,000-feet pass from Kashmir must be crossed, or one equally high from Chamba ; or else there are ten weary marches up the Chenab from Jammu. And, having got there, if the traveller expects fair fields and orchards, broad roads and prosperous villages, he will be much disappointed ; for instead are great jagged cliffs of giant pine and boulder, often ending in a sheer drop to the torrent far below ; open mountain-sides so steep that the villagers in many places bind the hard-won hay in bundles and roll them down to their huts without need of further transport. Above all rise the great mountains, some of them over

20,000 feet in height, wreathed in snow and seamed with glaciers, unclimbed, and by power of crevasse and avalanche, blinding blizzard and bitter frost, denying access to all but the most adventurous.

It is a hard land, ever threatened with famine and buried in snow for several months ; where, after heavy rain, a man's field may slip away, leaving nothing but the bare rock for him to plough ; or perhaps taking his house along with it, burying him and his family. But in spring, when the genial sun, melting the snow, brings water and warmth to the tiny terraced fields, and the fresh green grass begins to push its way through last year's frost-blackened stems, it becomes a land of beauty as well as grandeur, clothed in verdure and bright with blossom. Then is the time for the big-game hunter. Ibex and tahr, goural and serow, red bear and black bear, the hard days of winter past and o'er, feed greedily on the luscious new grass, and are to be seen close to the melting snow, both morning and evening, glutting themselves with the produce of the sun-warmed soil.

I had seen the country before, but in October, when the long slippery grass made the hill-sides dangerous to walk on, and the game was far up on the tops of the mountains, hard to find, owing to the extent of ground free from snow and so open for the beasts to wander over. I had bagged some goural, but the few days remaining of my leave had not sufficed to bring me within range of a tahr, though I had bagged nearly every other species of game in the Himalayas in the course of my eight months' trip. For the last six weeks of it I had with me as shikari a native of Kishtwar, Rupah by name, and with him I had killed a couple of barasingh stags, a bear and three goural, and, thinking him a good man to take with me after tahr, early in

March, two years later, I wired to him to come to Srinagar with four camp coolis. I myself, in the last week of the month, left the glare-stricken frontier post of Dargai for Kashmir. With me were my bearer and my orderly, Nawash Ali and Mogul Khan, both big Punjabi Mussulmans, and my two dogs, Punch and Sammy, the first, half bull-dog half bull-terrier, the second a field spaniel. After the usual weary tonga journey we reached Srinagar, to find Rupah there with three other Kishtwaris, and a Kashmiri who had been with me on my previous eight months' trip, by name Ismaila. Two of the three Kishtwaris had also been with me before, and were both named Mangla; the elder (who was to do tiffin cooli) a tall lean man with wonderful eyesight, the other a youth of about twenty. The third was to do dak cooli and help in camp, and was named Namdu. We spent the day at Srinagar in local purchases, much assisted by Punch, whose cavernous growls kept the importunate Kashmiri vendors at a distance, so that I could select the man I wanted and call him up. The only man who ventured to intrude on my privacy unbidden lost the seat of his "slacks", which Punch retained as a trophy.

The afternoon following the day of our arrival, we left by doongah for Islamabad, which is about forty-five miles from Srinagar by boat and twenty-eight by road. The doongah is a large, flat-bottomed boat, with boarded roof and mat sides. It is not so expensive as a house-boat, and consequently the usual dwelling-place of the subaltern in Kashmir, in fact of most bachelors on leave in the Vale.

It generally has a living-room, bedroom and bath-room, with an open space in the bow in which to sit in fine weather, and a mat-covered place behind for the Kashmiri boatmen or "manjhis". These doongahs

are very comfortable for solitary bachelors, and the larger ones hold two with ease. They also have the advantage of drawing less water than the heavier house-boat, and so are able to take short cuts through shallow channels impossible to the bigger craft.

After two and a half days' monotonous travelling between the flat banks of the Jhelum, the manjhis towing all day and quarrelling all night, we reached Islamabad early in the morning of April 1st. The previous evening we had passed Bij Behara with its picturesque tree-grown bridge of bird-cage piers, and as it is only seven miles by road, I had there landed Mangla in order that he might have ponies ready for us on our arrival. But in spite of this precaution we did not succeed in getting away till nearly 11 o'clock, owing to the innumerable difficulties put in our way by the petty native officials, who each strove to bring his claim for bakshish into prominence, by trying to prove his assistance indispensable.

That evening we camped at a hamlet some fourteen miles from Islamabad, after an uninteresting march, and there, while pitching camp, I saw the biggest wild boar I have ever seen. He appeared on a ridge close to camp, but vanished before I could uncase my rifle. The great boar shot by Rajah Amar Singh was killed somewhere near there, and he seemed almost to equal that great beast's dimensions of 40 inches at the shoulder and 600 lbs. weight. Next morning a five-mile march brought us to Doosoo, a village at the foot of the Sinthan pass.

We had now arrived at the beginning of our really hard marching. The Sinthan pass is over 12,000 feet high, and is the most usual route between the Kashmir valley proper and the lower Wardwan and middle Chenab valleys. At any time up to the first week in

May it is a stiff proposition, and with bad weather it may be exceedingly dangerous. The news at Doosoo was not very encouraging. The winter snowfall had been exceptionally heavy on the pass, and no one had yet crossed that year ; also the villagers feared that a change in the weather was threatening and pointed to clouds over the mountains to the east, where the pass lay. However, things were not likely to improve for another fortnight, so I decided to take my chance, and march with a double number of coolis so as to travel light, and I promised them double pay for the trip of twenty-one miles.

I put all my permanent staff on to making grass shoes or " pullahs " for the rest of the day. These are a kind of sandal made of plaited rice straw. They are worn with special socks, an inner woollen pair and an outer pair of felt. These socks have a separate compartment for the big toe, and a main thong of the sandal passes between it and the next toe ; the sandals are then laced tightly over the foot. These " pullahs " give a wonderful grip on rock, and their only disadvantage is that they wear out very quickly. On ordinary ground I found that a pair lasted me a day and a half, but on bad rock, such as I came across later on in the course of this trip, they used to wear out in a day, or even less. The double sock is also a great safeguard against frost-bite when marching in snow.

In the evening the coolis arrived, and I arranged to march at 1 A.M., at which time the snow would be hard, and the moon risen.

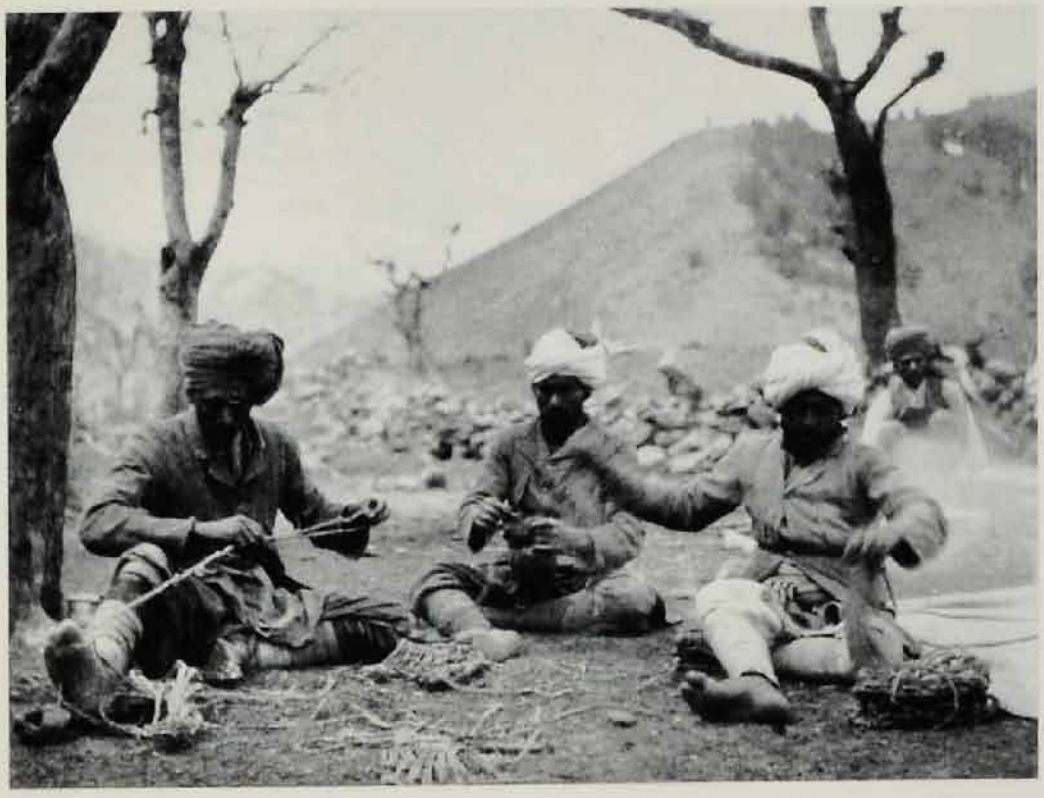
Having packed everything possible, I had dinner and went to sleep as soon as it was dark, and rose again half an hour after midnight to swallow some hot cocoa and biscuits. We got away punctually at 1 o'clock, and were on snow within two miles of starting. The

snow was deep and soft amongst the pine trees, and we floundered through it, waist-deep in many places, tripping over roots and making little progress. The sun rose and found us not more than five miles on our way, and by 9 o'clock we had not covered more than another two. The valley we were in now opened out a little, and though the snow was firmer, it was obvious that we could not cross that day, as, by the time we reached the top of the pass, avalanches of sun-loosed snow would be sweeping the slopes on the far side. I therefore decided to halt where we were for the day, and start again at 1 A.M. It was a fine sunny day, and it was no great hardship to sit on broken pine boughs placed on the snow, but when it grew dark the cold was very trying, and clouds began to gather to the south-east. At midnight I woke to find the sky heavily overcast, and shortly before 1 o'clock it began to snow heavily. It snowed steadily on, and our prospects looked very black, but at 5 A.M. it cleared suddenly, and we started off at our best pace. There was about a foot of fresh snow on top, but underneath the crust had frozen hard, and so the going was fairly good. By 9 o'clock we were clear of the trees, and at 10 we reached the top of the pass in brilliant sunshine.

From a nearby hill-top the view was glorious. In front of us to the east were the great masses of the three Brahma Peaks, 21,000 feet in height, the centre one like an immense dome, a glittering snow-field at its base sloping to the deep gashes of precipice-guarded valleys, where torrents leaped and thundered past spurs thick clad with pine and deodar.

To either side of the three giants were range on range of glittering spire and castle and hog-backed ridge, black-streaked with rock arête so steep that no snow could lie, fading away to the south in blue haze

AT THE TOP OF THE PASS.



THE STAFF MAKE "PULLAHS"

To face page 24.

and dark green forest, and, to the north, ending in the distant summits of the 23,000-feet Nun Kun twins, small but clear cut against the blue of the sky. Behind us was spread the "faire Vale of Kashmir", silver threads indicating the rivers through the haze which veiled it, bounded on the south by the long jagged ridge of the Pir Panjal range, and on the north by the mountains over the Sind valley, amongst which it was not hard to pick out the cowl of Kolahoi and the four-square keep of Haramuk. Far away to the west, one snowy mass rose solitary above the mist of distance —Nanga Parbat—virgin goddess, alone in grandeur, wrapped in mystery, on whose slopes perished the gallant Mummery and his companions in a valiant effort to destroy the legend of her inviolability.

But there was little time to stand and admire. As I waited for the last cooli to reach the top a feathery spurt of snow detached itself from a slope a couple of miles away and down thundered an avalanche. It was a fair warning, so we began the descent at once. First we glissaded 1000 feet of slope, Sammy yelping with delight while Punch galloped clumsily in rear, sulky and shivering; then we laboured through the snow of the gully below for a couple of miles, and after another short glissade reached an open space where a larger valley joined ours. This was Sinthan, from which the pass takes its name. There are two log huts there, but no sign of them or the stream was visible beneath their shroud of white. Then began the worst part of the day's journey. We had to make our way along the hill-side above the stream through deep soft snow, in which Rupah and I took turns to lead and so tramp a path of sorts for the coolis. Then came the first avalanche, a small one. It roared down the hill less than fifty yards in front of us, and great five-

foot snowballs bounded along on either side and ahead of it.

We clambered over the debris, then crossed a snow bridge to the left bank of the stream, Punch providing some amusement by slipping off into a deep drift; amusement soon quenched, as far as I was concerned, by my getting about a pound and a half of snow down the back of my neck in the process of rescuing him. Our way now became easier as the snow was still hard on the north bank, but we were by no means finished with the avalanches, for a bigger one poured down a couloir just after we had crossed, one or two of its snowballs actually passing between the last two or three coolis. Shortly afterwards a small one made an attempt on us, but was turned by a projecting lump of rock. Soon the path began to appear through the snow in places, the pines ranked closer and closer, until at 7 P.M. we emerged at the village of Chingram after fourteen hours of steady toil, weary and soaked with melted snow. I was as tired as the coolis, for leading the way through waist-deep snow is most exhausting work, and I had had to carry Punch over the worst places, as he seemed incapable of getting along, though Sammy enjoyed himself thoroughly and came in as fresh as paint.

Next morning I felt very stiff, but after a few miles along the bank of the Sinthan river, which doubled in volume a couple of miles below Chingram by the junction of the Marbal stream, soon wore it off, and I was able to appreciate the beauties of this lovely valley. The stream holds some big snow trout, but I had not time to stop and fish, as Rupah and I intended to push on ahead of the coolis to have a try for a goural in the evening on the cliffs above the Chenab. There are some magnificent deodars and pines growing in this

valley, and I have been told by an official of the company which runs the timber getting in Kishtwar, of one "kail" from which 212 ten-foot sleepers were cut. Twelve miles from Chingram we reached the Wardwan river, whose boiling torrent of turbid water swallows up the clear stream of the Sinthan. Four miles further on we crossed the Wardwan by a good suspension bridge, and after three miles along its left bank came to the fine bridge of the same type which has been built across the Chenab just above the junction of the two rivers. Under it is one of the few bits of smooth water on the turbulent Chenab. A long pool of tremendous depth, edged with smooth water-worn rocks and overhung by tree-clad precipices, only the occasional suck and swirl of a miniature whirlpool testifies to the force of the currents below. We climbed to a shady nook on the north side of the river, and there I lunched and read and lazed till 4 o'clock. Then we began to sit up and take notice, for it was time for the goural to begin feeding, and we brought field-glasses and telescope to bear on the ledges of the opposite cliffs.

Goural have a wonderful knack of hiding themselves, and turn up suddenly in unexpected places, so the appearance of a female on a ledge which seemed quite inaccessible, and had been untenanted a minute before, was not altogether a surprise. Half an hour later a small male came into view 100 feet above her. The light began to fade, and I had just closed the telescope, when I caught sight of a light-coloured patch moving on a ledge some fifty feet above the river. I pointed it out to Rupah, who examined it intently. "A white goural", he exclaimed. I re-opened the telescope and looked. Sure enough it was a buck goural of a light cream colour, feeding quietly on a small patch of grass. We hurried along our side of the

river till we were stopped by a cliff over which we had not time to climb, and I had to take a long shot of about 250 yards. A goural only stands some 26 inches at the shoulder, so is a very poor mark at that range and in a bad light, but I might never see a cream-coloured goural again. The rifle woke rolling echoes in the gorge, my bullet starred the rock a hand's breadth above him, and he leapt for safety, gained a bush-hung fissure in three jumps, and so vanished. We turned back and crossed the bridge to camp, a little sad at the failure of the first shot of the trip.

Next morning the outfit climbed the hill to the curious plateau on which stands the town of Kishtwar. It is evidently the result of a fan-shaped alluvial deposit left by the Chenab before it cut itself into the present channel in which it now flows, 1500 feet below the north and west sides of the plateau. There are several hamlets dotted about the hills fringing the plain where stands the town which gives its name to the district, and to reach it from the west (the way by which we came) a large grassy space is crossed on which one could lay out a couple of polo grounds or a nine-hole golf course, with fields and orchards all about it. Just outside the western boundary of the town stand some fine plane trees, the " chenar " of Kashmir, and under these we pitched our tents.

The town itself is worthy of no eulogy, either by reason of its architecture, which is crude in the extreme, or its trade, which is nothing to speak of, or its sanitation, which is non-existent. It is in fact but a collection of flat-roofed mud houses, sheltering some two thousand inhabitants in a perhaps enhanced state of danger from small-pox or cholera, such as is endemic in the hills. Why epidemics do not scourge these hill villages more frequently is a mystery to the European

A ROPE BRIDGE, CHENAB VALLEY.

To face page 28.

accustomed to at any rate a moderate degree of cleanliness, for their immediate surroundings are an offence to eye and nose, and amongst the beauties of the hills impress the traveller with the sense that "only man is vile".

Camp being pitched and emissaries despatched in search of eggs and vegetables, I summoned Rupah to discuss our plan of campaign. We were the first in the district that year by a fortnight, and so had unlimited choice of shooting-ground; but Rupah had fixed his heart on a certain nullah, by name Kijar, into which he said no sahib had ever penetrated. It was very difficult of access, but he said he knew of a way in, though it would be very stiff climbing. He also declared that it was enchanted and known as "Paristan", or Fairyland; for in bygone days there had been a village in it, but the inhabitants had angered the gods, and these one day had destroyed the village and its fields by tempest, fire and flood. Ever since then few men had dared to enter it, and those who had penetrated its fastnesses by a difficult path which opened later in the year had all been smitten by misfortune. However, Rupah assured me that he knew the right "mantras"[1] to repeat, and we would sacrifice a sheep and all would be well. I pulled out the map and examined Kijar. There it was. A narrow valley some sixteen miles in length with no offshoots (this I subsequently discovered was incorrect), joining the right bank of the Chenab some forty miles east of Kishtwar. At the head of the nullah was a glacier some eight or nine miles in length, above which lay some big peaks from whose eastern sides stretched other nullahs, which I knew held big ibex. It looked as if Kijar should also hold some good heads, and Rupah swore that the lower half of the

[1] Mantras = "charms".

nullah was alive with tahr, so I agreed to tackle the problem, being much attracted by the mysteries of this " Fairyland ".

At an early hour on April 7 we left Kishtwar, and climbing the ridge on the north-east of the town, entered the ilex woods which here cover the middle slopes of the hills above the Chenab. Above them the forest is of pine and deodar, below of mixed trees, birch and pomegranate, with an undergrowth of brambles and bracken largely predominating ; though in places the pines run right down to the water's edge. The path ran pretty level, and I walked ahead with the dogs and my scatter-gun on the look out for something for the pot. Sammy dashed off into the jungle and worked along parallel to the path and some thirty-five yards above me. Suddenly I heard an excited yelp, and two koklass pheasants whirred down-hill. One I dropped on the path and the other crashed down into the undergrowth about forty yards below me, whence Sammy soon returned in triumph dragging him by the wing. Sammy, I regret to say, retrieves untidily. A mile further on he plunged into a thicket of brambles above some fields, and out came an old cock chikor whom I also knocked over, and not 200 yards away I found a flock of blue pigeon feeding, and by browning them as they rose, collected five. I may say Kishtwar holds numbers of pheasants : snow-cock, manal, cheer, koklass, kalej and Western Trogapan. These are rarely shot at, for there are no sportsmen there in the winter ; and in the summer they are often a great nuisance to the big-game hunter, warning the quarry of his approach by loud cries and pipings. I had now got sufficient to last me for a few days, so we pushed on steadily to Bagni, Rupah's native village,

which lies sixteen miles from Kishtwar, where we were to obtain coolis for the next three marches to Atholi, the chief village of Padar in which Kijar lies. Padar is a subdivision of the Kishtwar district, and is controlled by a petty official called a naib-tahsildar; Kishtwar being a tahsil is under a tahsildar.

Arrived at Bagni I found the fields were still full of half-melted snow, so pitched my tent on the flat mud roof of the largest house, and then sent for the lumbardar and told him my wants in the matter of coolis. Some of them had to be summoned from hamlets across the river, where I had hunted goural and tahr on my previous visit; so in the afternoon a great drum was produced, which throbbed and boomed its message to the men across the valley. It is often nearly a day's march between villages but two or three miles apart as the crow flies: four thousand feet of narrow goat track down to cross the foaming river by a crazy bridge of twisted birch twig ropes which sways and kicks in the wind; then four thousand feet to climb through forest and bracken, to where the little wooden penthouses shelter the guardian godlings of one's nearest neighbours' fields. It is a quaint custom these Hindus of the Chenab valley have, of building little huts for their "deotas" in which these brownies may do sentry over the crops; when I first saw them I thought that they were dog kennels.

In the evening some of the coolis arrived, greeting me politely as they passed my hut. They are slighter built men than the Kashmiri as a rule, but their faces are not stamped with the marks of successive tyrannies such as have rendered the Mussulman of the Happy Valley the fawning sycophant he is. These Hindus were out of the conquerors' line of march and had no great wealth or fair country to tempt them, so escaped

most of the misfortunes which overtook their neighbours to the west. They were dressed in homespun woollen garments, light grey in colour, a long coat coming down over a pair of tight-fitting trousers of the pattern known as Jodhpurs, a cummerbund of cotton cloth wound round their waists, and on their heads a wadded, helmet-shaped cap, which covered their ears and the nape of the neck. Their grass shoes are of thinner rope than the Kashmiri pattern, and fit loosely. Their number was completed at dawn, and we got away at sunrise. The path wound round the spurs with little change of grade, through woods for the first three miles, when we passed the last village we should meet till near Atholi. Half an hour later we emerged on to an open stretch of grassy boulder-strewn hill-side. Here Rupah thought we might find a goural, so, leaving the path, we descended a couple of hundred feet to where a big rocky outcrop formed a small cliff. Arrived at this we crawled to the edge and, craning over, inspected the slopes below. A goural half-hidden amongst some brambles soon caught my eye, and Rupah pointed to a small dark blot which indicated the presence of another a little further below and to the left. The telescope showed mine to be a female (they have thinner, shorter horns than the male), whereas Rupah's was a good male. He was under 200 yards away, so I got out the rifle, and waiting till he showed clear of intervening twigs and grass, I pressed the trigger, and had the pleasure of seeing him roll down-hill stone dead. We clambered down to him, and found him to have a nice pair of horns $6\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. The coolis had arrived on the path above us, and the shot attracted Nawash Ali and my orderly. They came running to view the result, and taking a slightly different line to us, jumped off a

rock into some old bracken out of which started another goural. He came bounding down-hill about eighty yards away, and I picked up the glasses to inspect him. Finding he was a buck, I let drive at him and had the pleasure of seeing him turn a somersault in response to my shot. The two Mussulmans gave a combined yell of joy and raced headlong to cut his throat and make him lawful meat. They come off badly as a rule when one is shooting with men of other religions, for no animal killed is then "halal", and they cannot eat their share of the game. On this occasion Mogul Khan beat Nawash Ali by a short head, and shouted that it was a big buck "rain" as the Punjabis call the goural.

The horns, however, turned out to be only a quarter of an inch longer than the first pair. We gralloched them both, skinned and cut up the carcasses, then packed them in the skins, making neat bundles by tying the four legs together, then climbing back to the path set off to overtake the coolis. We came up with them at a narrow ravine some five miles further on, and as there was shade and running water, had a general halt for lunch, after which I lazed and let the coolis have half an hour's start while I admired the dazzling peaks on the far side of the Chenab. After an hour's walking we overtook the coolis, then, passing under some overhanging crags and climbing 300 yards of rock staircase, we suddenly turned a corner and found ourselves looking up the glorious vista of Lidráree gorge.

Here we were to halt for the night, so putting all extra kit in a large rock cavern close to where a waterfall plunged thundering into the dark depths of an archway in the packed debris of a great avalanche, I pointed out to Mogul Khan a flat place near by on which to pitch my tent. Having walked back a

hundred yards along the road with Rupah, climbing on to a ledge above it, we proceeded to spy the cliffs on the opposite side of the gorge for tahr. We had been there about twenty minutes when Rupah said, "I see two females". I directed the telescope where he indicated, and immediately glimpsed a movement amongst some young pines; then, steadying the glass, made out a couple of buck tahr and several females feeding amongst the trees. I handed the telescope to Rupah and asked him to judge the heads. One buck was worth shooting, he said, the other a small one.

We marked the spot carefully and, picking up the elder Mangla on the way, crossed the stream by a greasy, slippery fir-trunk and started up the face of the opposite hill. We were now in dead ground and quite out of sight of the tahr, so we only took chances with the wind so far. It was getting near sunset and the breeze should shortly change to down-hill with so much snow about, but in any case we had to chance it as we could only stay the night in that camp. The climbing was not stiff. We made our way up a narrow gully to a point some 400 feet above the stream and 300 below the tahr. Then we turned right-handed and slightly up-hill towards a dead pine which we had noticed close under where they were feeding. The cliff was broken into big steps, and we had climbed two of these and reached the edge of an open stone chute when Mangla pulled my arm and pointed. One hundred and fifty yards above us the light brown coat of a ewe showed amongst the tree-trunks. Then she sounded a warning whistle, more light patches began to flicker amongst the pines, and the herd began to cross the stone chute above us and to our right. My head was only just clear of the rock in front of me and I could not shoot from where I stood, so stepped into

a crack a foot or so higher up, while Rupah put his shoulders into the small of my back and kept me pressed against the rock ; thus I had both hands free to use my rifle and field-glasses. Three, five, seven ewes sent pebbles rattling down the chute as they crossed. A buck appeared in the trees on the left : it was the small one. Then a darker coat showed and the bigger buck sprang on to the chute. I was ready for him, and half-way across my bullet caught him through the heart and he came rolling down towards us. Faster he spun and thicker whizzed the accompanying stones, till, with two immense bounds, he whirled past us and brought up against the base of a pine below with a thud which made it quiver from base to tip.

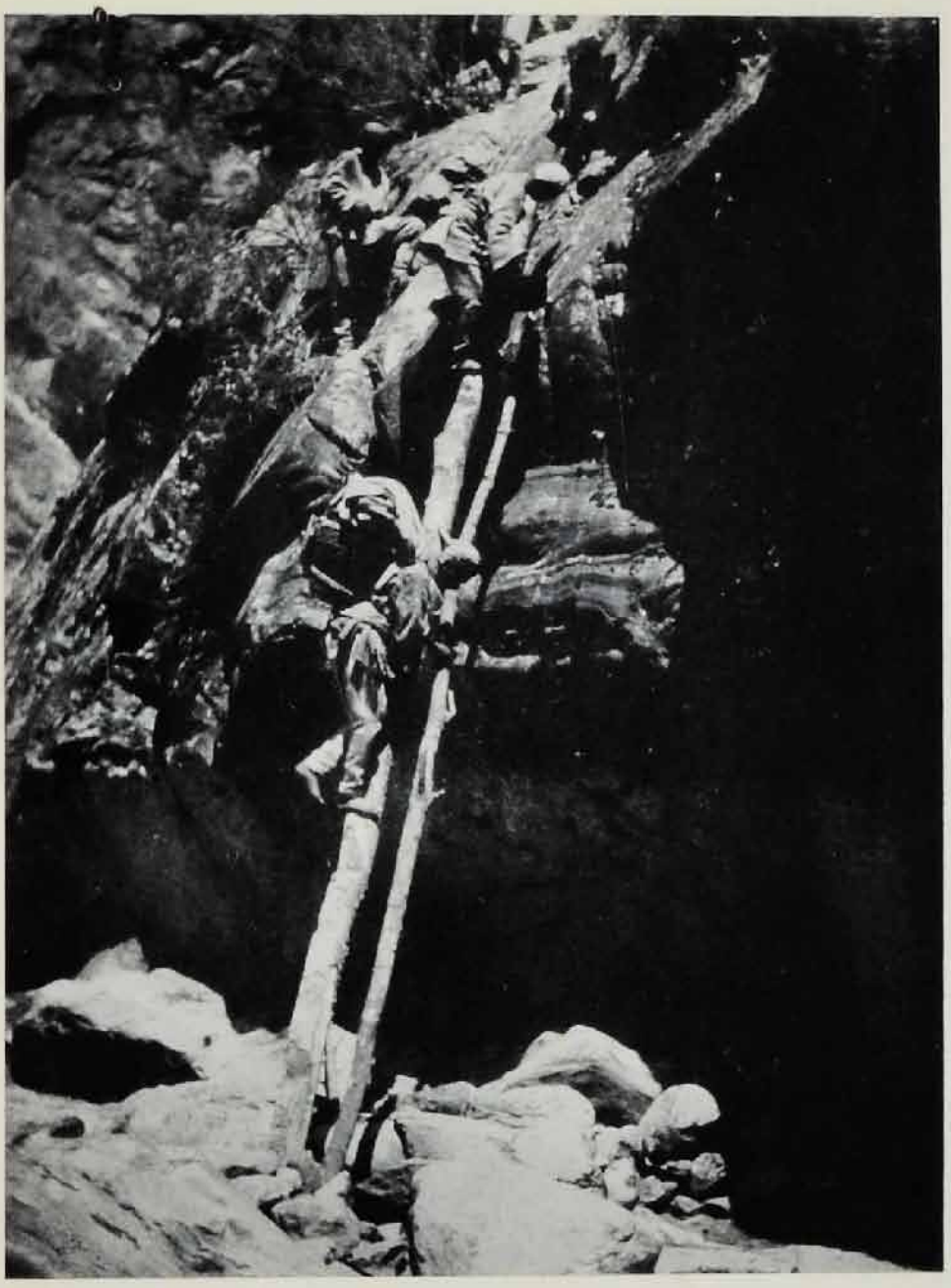
His horns were nothing very good, only $11\frac{3}{4}$ inches, but still he was shootable, and a beginning anyway.

That night the coolis slept well, full of meat, and though the waterfall roared right loudly it failed to keep me from dropping off as soon as my head touched the pillow.

Beyond Lidráree the ordinary road mounts high above the cliffs which here rise sheer from the river, but it had been carried away by avalanches in several places, so for the next seven miles we would have to take the way close down by the Chenab, known as the old road. Leaving camp we crossed the Lidráree stream, and traversing a small spur, clambered down a break-neck track to the river. Then over the boulders beside the water until we had to scale the cliff again, first by a notched pole placed against a projecting mass of rock, thence by staircases of rotten pieces of wood, thrust into cracks and crannies. At other times crossing great fissures by slender birch poles placed across the void, then having reached some giddy ledge we would

descend to the river by another such crazy road, till the exhausted coolis claimed a halt and threw down their loads amongst the rocks beside the river to rest and smoke awhile. For five miles we poised and clambered and clutched, and then the track grew easier. We passed a long ragged rope bridge connecting the village of Soojar with our bank, till finally we pushed our way up through a tangle of brushwood, and found ourselves standing once again on the main track fifty yards below the cave of Shasho, where we intended stopping the night. We arrived at mid-day, and in the afternoon, Rupah, Mangla No. 1, and I climbed the hill above us, and after passing a bear's snug winter nest under some tree roots, we reached a point where the forest began to thin and stretches of rock and grass appear.

We lay down on a small grassy knoll to look about us, and had not been there five minutes when a fine buck tahr appeared on a bluff some 500 yards higher up. Quickly we slid down-hill till out of sight, then manœuvred to a less open vantage point to have another look. He still stood there, and as we watched five more old males came out of the forest to join him and all stood gazing down-hill, the wind whisking the shaggy hair of their long coats so that their ruffs were blown about their heads. Soon they began to feed and I to crawl forward under shelter of a little bush-filled gully. I had gained fifty yards, when, from a few paces in front, up jumped a cock monal pheasant and sailed piping and whistling down the hill, the sun glinting on the blue of his plumage. The tahr raised their heads and I froze. Down went their heads again, and I resumed my crawl. Another explosion and again I cursed a monal in spite of all his beauty. The same scene was re-enacted, but this time they took longer to



A NOTCHED POLE—PART OF THE ROAD.

To face page 36.

settle down. Again I advanced, and had nearly reached my destination, when with shriek and clatter two long-tailed Chir burst from under my feet and fled clamouring away. This was too much for the tahr and they moved off into the trees, while we returned to camp anathematising the whole pheasant tribe, whether with long tails or short.

There was rain in the night, and as we set forth on the morrow dense mists drove along the mountains across the valley, though on our side it soon cleared and the sun came out and dried the dripping foliage. At a small landslide we surprised two beautiful pine-martens playing amongst the debris, but for several miles there was no incident to mark the journey till Rupah pointed across the river and said, "That is Kijar nullah". We soon arrived opposite it.

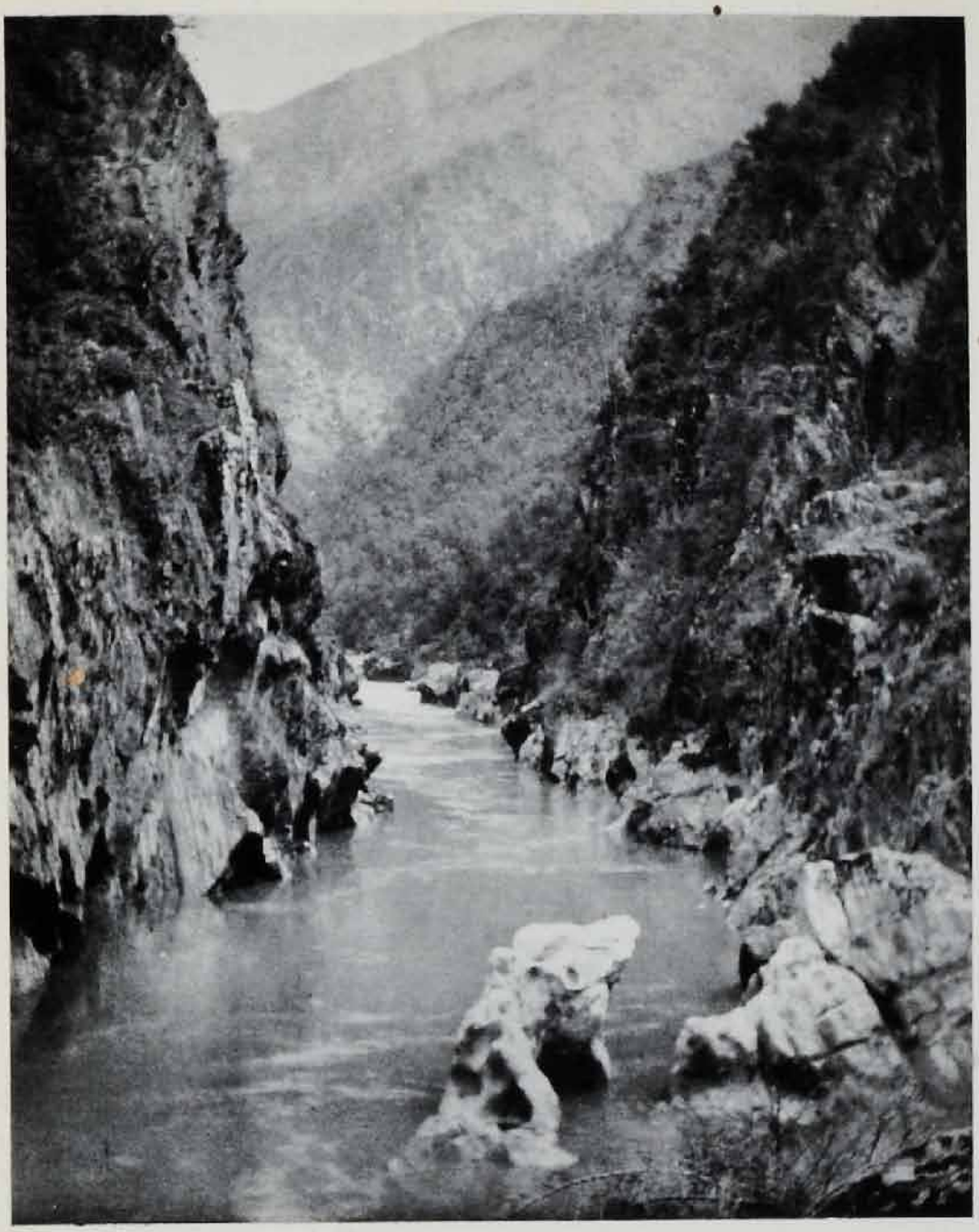
On the far side of the Chenab a great rock face rose some 300 feet from the water's edge, and showed a narrow gash down its centre from whose base rushed a foaming torrent to join the river. From its shoulders rose tier on tier of forest and precipice, jagged ridge and frowning crags, till their tops were hidden by hurrying clouds through whose rents gleamed snow and ice. Under the veil of mist gloomed a narrow canyon, one sheer grey granite wall to the west, and on the east a steep slope of tree-hung rock, ending at its furthest visible point in a long smooth slant of snow, like a giant slide let down from the clouds above.

I lay down on a ledge, and pulled out the telescope to inspect some patches of grass just below the mist on the west face of the nullah. As I steadied it the vapour blew aside and revealed three fine old tahr, all in the field of the glass together. I swept the glass to left and right, and every change of position showed more grand dark-brown beasts till I had counted

twenty-four old males grazing in a space a hundred yards square. Then the mist covered them again and I tried the cliffs to the east of the nullah. Here again within ten minutes I picked up some beasts, and eventually counted eight good heads in a mixed herd of forty or more tahr, also three goural lower down. What the upper mists hid I could but guess, and the ground inside the nullah was not yet inspected. I closed my telescope with the feeling that great things were before me on the far side of the river. We resumed our march towards Atholi, until some four miles further on the road dipped to the water's edge and here Rupah stopped and pointed to the cliffs opposite. Indicating a break in their line above us like a giant's mouthful bitten from the mountains, he said, "That is Sunglali, and in it we shall camp and find our way into Kijar". He said the road would lie across the sheer precipice which bounded it on the west, and pointed out a thin spidery line which ran across it—a fault in the formation which we would follow to make our traverse. "But", I argued, "it ends before it gets three-quarters of the way; how are we to cross the remaining portion?" Rupah replied, unmoved, that there was a way and we would find it. I hoped we would and not break our necks in the doing of it.

Arrived at a point two miles short of Atholi, we found that we were in luck's way; for the winter bridge of two pine trunks thrown across the Chenab from a pile of boulders on either bank had not yet been swept away by the water swollen by the melting snows, so we crossed and saved five miles thereby.

The coolis from Bagni were paid off here, and we had to collect fresh men to take us up to Sunglali on the morrow. At first the villagers protested much.



CHENAB GORGE BELOW KISHTWAR TOWN. THE HOME OF GOURAL.

To face page 38.

The way was impossible for the snow still lay heavy on the slopes which faced the north, and as for Paristan it was full of evil godlings who would slay or maim those who might trespass on their domain. I replied that, as far as Sunglali was concerned, Rupah and I would lead the way and they could follow, while as for the godlings of Paristan I would make an offering of goats, and Rupah knew the right "mantras" to repeat, so all would be well. At this they gave in, the thought of partaking of the sacrificial goats' meat having, I feel sure, much greater influence than any number of "mantras".

So we fared forth again at dawn, and after an hour's journeying along the river bank began to climb, and continued to do so for two more good hours, until at last we reached a grassy spur, and Rupah declared that this was our highest point. While the coolis rested and smoked, I followed him to the edge of the grass and found myself standing on the eastern point of the semicircle of cliffs which enclose Sunglali nullah, and gazed across it at the thousand-foot face which we should have to cross to reach our "Fairyland". Almost between my toes as I stood the Chenab gleamed far below through the tree-tops, and our task did not promise to be any too easy. The path by which we were to traverse the great cliff seemed to offer very poor foothold in places, while at its southern end it seemed to vanish altogether for the last two hundred feet, merging itself into what appeared to be a quite unclimbable stretch of sheer rock. All along its jagged top it was fringed with giant pines above whose tops gleamed distant snowy peaks. Out of the face of the cliff a few pines grew bracket-wise, while up through the scented boughs of those below us came the distant murmur of the snow-fed cataract. To our right the

hill above us was thick with more pines, and through them we could catch an occasional glimpse of the mountain-tops at the head of the nullah ; gaunt and bare, streaked with snow and flecked with small clouds like puffs of smoke from bursting shells, they showed no single slope by which we might climb, but only a savage jumble of iron-stone crags, sheer walls and sentinels of rock.

Amongst the trees below us to our right the snow lay thick, but on our continuing our journey we found the crust firm and quite good going. Half a mile through the trees and we turned left-handed to a slope facing southward and so clear of snow. Here, as we descended, the younger Mangla suddenly exclaimed and pointed. About 200 yards below us and to our left, a buck tahr posed on an overhanging rock, gazing into the void below. I handed Rupah the glasses and grabbed the rifle. "Good head", he said, and I let fly. The tahr seemed to leap straight into space and vanished. I listened in vain for the thud or rattle of stones which would tell me that he was dead. "Miss", said Rupah, and after a toilsome climb to where he had been standing, and an examination of the rocks below, I had to admit that he was right. Half an hour of zigzag descent then brought us to a grassy dell at the foot of a smooth wall of rock, and this was our camping ground. The grass was littered with great slabs of granite riven by frost from the crags above, and though I was assured that no more would fall this year, I pitched my tent as far as possible outside the radius of their action. The four Kishtwaris took up their residence in a small cave some fifty yards away, but my own servants pitched their tent right amongst the fallen boulders, and throughout our stay in that camp I was tormented by visions of their utter

obliteration by the fall of some hundred-ton monster from above.

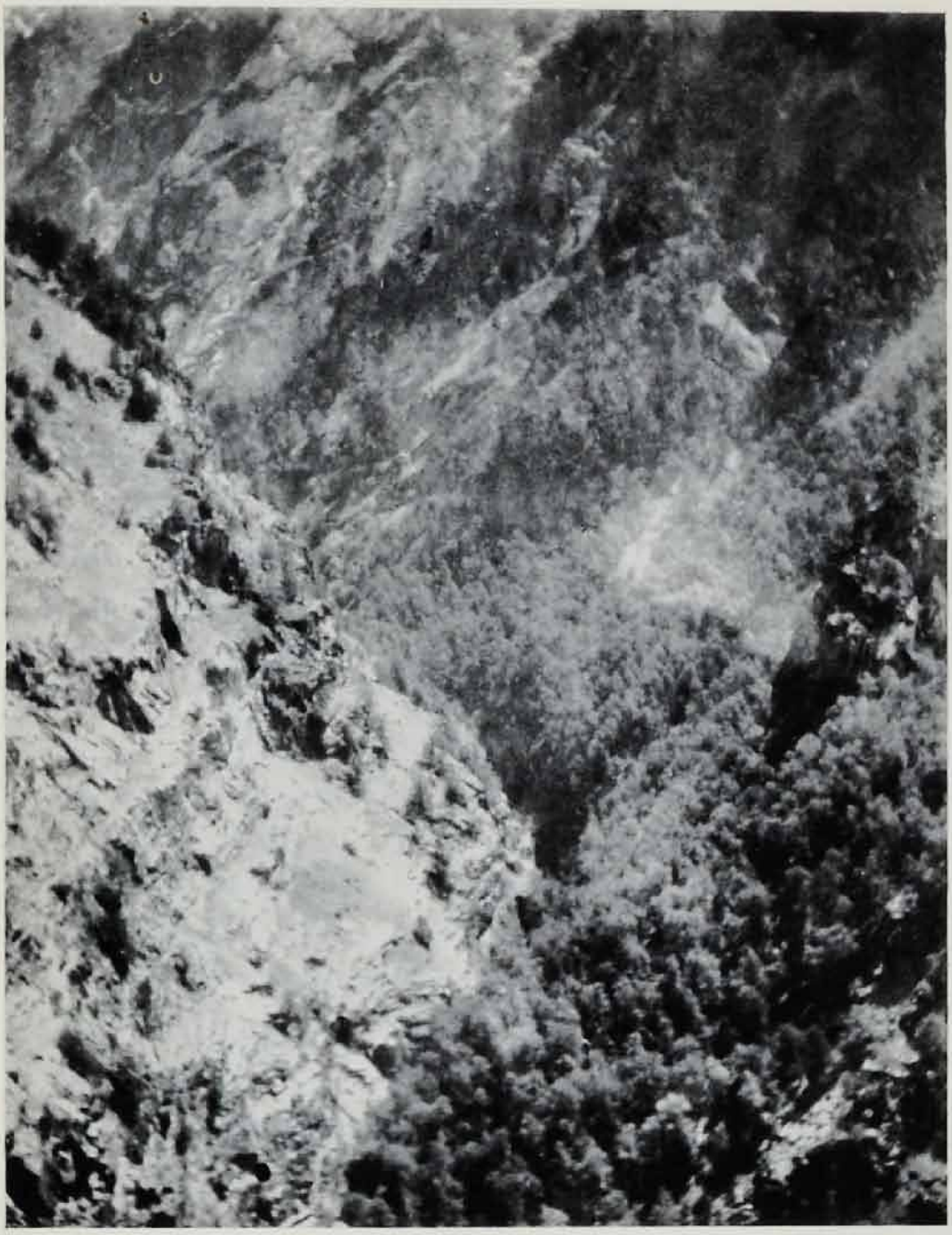
Our camp was on the right side of the nullah, down whose centre a stream cascaded headlong to the river far below. To the south of us but out of sight behind a small pine-clad spur was the great cliff we were to cross, behind us the rock, and on its north-west side a steep couloir heaped with great boulders, which might give us an alternative route to our valley of mystery. Facing camp was the broken forest-covered cliff down which we had come. Silhouetted between the jaws of the valley to the south were some fine peaks, including one castellated monster which I took to be the 18,000 ft. Gwalga of the map.

Most of the Himalayan peaks have no names, but are designated on the map by letters of the alphabet which show the group to which they belong, and numbers which are their tally in that group. Thus the great group which includes the giant Godwin Austen, 28,000 feet in height, and minor summits of 25,000 feet and over (such as Bride Peak, Gusherbrum and Masherbrum), all comes under the letter K. Next to it on the east come the R's, while U and D hold sway to the south-west, and the P's in central Ladakh and Zanskar. Here in Kishtwar all our peaks are J's and S's.

In the evening we climbed a little way to the south to view our route, and make improvements in the first half of it. This part, though it would have been unpleasant to any one with a poor head for heights, was fairly easy going; for the footholds were wide and sound, and a little trimming here and there and spade-work with the iron-shod ends of our alpenstocks (or "khud sticks" as they are called in India) did wonders.

Sunrise saw us at the point we had reached the

previous evening, and under an hour's climbing brought us to a small projecting platform of rock from which we could view the last two hundred feet of our traverse. A most unpleasant-looking bit it was. The cliff looked almost if not quite vertical, and worst of all the rock was unsound and crumbly owing to a recent fall, so that every foot- and handhold had to be tested with the greatest care before full weight could be put upon it. Rupah led, I followed, and the two Manglas came after me, the elder leading. Fortunately the Kishtwaris are magnificent climbers, only equalled, in my experience, by the Pathans of the markhor ground to the south of Kohat. The Baltis are very good, but have not the difficulties of varying conditions to contend with, or equal skill in picking out the best route over a bad bit. We clung and edged our way upwards, improving footholds with our khud-sticks wherever practicable, until we arrived within twenty yards of where a thick pine hung pendent from the edge of safety. Then the foothold Rupah had used broke away under my greater weight, and I sweated cold all over at the thought of the whirl through space and the smash far below. Fortunately my right foot was firm and I had one good handhold; then, Mangla thrust the end of his khud-stick into a crack under my groping left foot, I steadied myself on it, reached up and got hold of a firm knot of rock, pulled myself up another yard and then scrambled on to the ledge on which Rupah was already standing. Thence we soon reached the friendly root, hauled ourselves over the edge of the cliff and rested thankfully on the slope beyond. Then we inspected the way by which we had come, and saw immediately that there was a much easier way over the last bad bit, only a few yards above the line we had taken, but which had been



THE MOUTH OF THE KIJAR NULLAH.

To face page 42.

invisible from below. We improved the footholds for several yards back and then went on to look for tahr on the slopes beyond. A mile of easy going through pine-woods and over patches of hard snow brought us to a ridge commanding a grassy valley which sloped steeply from the base of the upper cliffs to the top of the great precipices above the river. Immediately we spotted a couple of bucks feeding 500 yards away on the far side, both of which had good heads.

An approach down the bare slope on our side was obviously impracticable, there was no way across the cliffs above, and the wind was blowing straight up-hill, so a descent was useless. There was nothing to do but wait. We lay on old snow in the shade of the pines, and those tahr fed very slowly towards the middle of the valley and I got colder and colder.

Do you know the long day's patience belly-down on frozen snow,
When the head of heads is feeding out of range ?

The lines ran in my head over and over again as my extremities gradually grew numb and the tahr slowly approached a bit of dead ground, which was hidden from us by a slight bulge in the slope on our side. Then one disappeared and the other had almost gone, but remained irritatingly half in sight for several more minutes during which I suffered torments. At last he vanished. I slipped over the ridge into the warmth of the sun, scrambled down the hill-side and under shelter of a large boulder. I lay some minutes to allow my numbed fingers to recover, then cautiously put my head over the right side of my sheltering rock. A hundred yards below one of the tahr was standing staring straight up at me. He turned to bolt just as I fired, came down on his knees, recovered and raced for

the forest in company with the other. A second shot kicked up a spurt of earth under his nose, and he was gone amongst the trees before I could fire again. We went down on to his track and found blood in plenty, so I ordered a rest before following him up and had lunch in the sun, whose warmth was most grateful and comforting. After an hour's wait we took up the tracks which led down-hill across a couple of ridges out on to a fearsome precipice. We crawled along more and more gingerly, till finally we turned a corner to find ourselves confronted by a smooth slope of rock set at an almost impossible angle. On the far side of this, some forty yards away, a mob of crows swooped and hovered with raucous cries round a small lateral fissure some three feet high in which a hairy hind leg was just visible with the glasses. The rock between offered no sort of foothold to me, and even if one of us had got as far as the recess there was always the danger that a last frantic effort of our quarry might send both man and beast hurtling over the edge to strike the rocks perhaps once or twice, then plunge into the river thousands of feet below. I could find no point of vantage from which I could see into the recess and things were at a deadlock. We waited another hour in case the tahr should move, and then left him reluctantly so as to get back to camp before dark. As we returned through the pines another fine buck jumped up from behind a fallen tree and was gone before I could get in a shot.

Half-way across the cliff we rested on the only broad ledge that lay on our road. Rupah pulled out the glasses, then pointed to a small dark blot which moved in the bottom of a narrow rift far below. "Another old buck", we will try for him in the morning and big Mangla can fetch the head of the other one.

We duly set forth at dawn and scrambled along the lower cliffs from ledge to ledge. At one point Rupah had to lower himself by my legs, and then hold my feet while I let myself down by a fir root. Shortly after sunrise we reached the final rock and looked down into our tahr's home. He was there and raised his head to look up at me when I dislodged a little shale in levelling the rifle. The bullet caught him fair between the eyes, passed out at the nape of his neck and smashed his spine between the shoulders. A very effective shot.

As we reached camp from below, Mangla came in from above carrying the head and skin of last night's tahr. He must have died within half an hour of our leaving, for the crows and vultures had already torn the mask, but they made a nice pair: Yesterday's head $13\frac{1}{2}$ inches, this morning's $12\frac{3}{4}$.

It rained the rest of the day, so I spent the time skinning the heads and writing up my diary. In the evening it cleared, and I had a consultation with Rupah. The way across the cliff was very difficult for coolis, even though we had greatly improved the going, so we agreed to try for another over the couloir at the back of the camp.

Accordingly on the morrow we climbed the heaped boulders till we reached the granite turrets above the tree line. Then we turned south till we had crossed above our camp to the summit of the cliffs below which I had had my stalk two days before. I craned over the edge and a chorus of whistles and snorts arose, while the air seemed alive with leaping tahr. They had been feeding just below the edge and evidently knew of no way down, for they bucked and bounded up and past us within a few paces of us; all ewes and small bucks. One buck, who evidently did not quite know where the danger lay, leapt on to a rock within five

yards of me and remained poised there for several seconds uncertain which way to go, till finally with a magnificent spring he reached a ledge nearly ten feet above him and sped after the others of the herd.

It seemed as if we were unlikely to discover a way down on that side if the tahr did not know of one, and by mid-day we had found no outlet to south or west. Everywhere we turned we were stopped by a perpendicular face of rock, obviously quite unclimbable. At one point we looked straight down on the back of a good tahr, 150 yards below us. To take the shot I had to hang downwards over a projecting rock while Rupah and Mangla held my legs. Is it to be wondered at that I missed ? In the afternoon we returned the way we had come, convinced that the traverse across the great cliff to the south was our only way.

The same evening Namdu left to fetch eight good coolis with whom to try the cliff road, and I laid out eight small bundles of food and bedding.

The coolis must have started by moonlight, for they were in camp by sunrise, and they seemed very pleased with their small loads. By 10 A.M. we had crossed the cliff in safety, the coolis making light of it. I had left Mogul Khan to look after the rest of the kit, but Punch and Sammy came with us. Sammy proved an excellent climber and very quick to take advantage of any help offered him, but Punch was unutterably clumsy and evidently had no head for heights, for he frequently halted close-pressed against the inner side and howled dismally. However, we got him over in time. An hour's walking took us past the spot where I had my previous stalk, then we crossed above the place where the wounded tahr had taken refuge. There were nice wide ledges and everything went swimmingly. Suddenly some tahr appeared above us. We were on

the face of a small cliff, and they had neither seen nor winded us, so I crouched low and drew the rifle from its case, while awaiting Rupah's verdict on the heads. In doing so I knocked against Punch, and he evidently suspected me of an attempt to hurl him over the edge, for he promptly closed up against the rock, shut his eyes and gave vent to dismal cries. The tahr naturally did not stay upon the order of their going, so having smacked Punch's ugly head, I went onwards. At 1 o'clock we reached a wooded crest, and looked down through the trees into Kijar. There was little to be seen on account of the foliage; the only fact that was evident was that the west side of the nullah, which faced us, was so sheer as to be quite unclimbable as far as we could see up-stream, though it broke into easier ground near the mouth. We descended amongst the pines, and immediately discovered that our difficulties were not over, for we found ourselves brought up by an impracticable drop. We tried again to the right, and found after pushing through some 200 yards of undergrowth that a long smooth slope of water-worn rock barred our way. It ended in space some thirty yards below, and down its centre trickled a rivulet from the snows above. It was perhaps fifteen yards wide and very slippery, but a crack ran right across it, and stepping carefully on this we negotiated the passage in safety. After this the going was fairly easy. We made a false move once or twice, but a try back soon revealed a way down, and we began to near the bottom of the nullah. A cooli whistled and pointed. An old buck tahr was feeding alone just across the valley. I slipped cautiously down-hill, keeping under cover of the hazels, and so got within 160 yards. At the shot he rolled down-hill and brought up against a fallen tree; out of sight behind it, but

apparently as dead as mutton. Between us and the tahr was the narrow rift, some 250 feet in depth, at the bottom of which the torrent boiled. It was only about forty feet wide at the top, so quite impassable. I told the coolis they could rest where they were while Rupah and I went higher up to try and find a crossing place, taking both the Manglas and Nawash Ali in case we came across a good camping ground on our way. We pushed along the bank through tangled undergrowth, and about 500 yards higher up we came in sight of a fine waterfall where the stream plunged down into the opening of the rift. We were making for the bank a little above it where a fallen pine seemed to promise a means of transit, when Rupah caught sight of six fine tahr feeding on the opposite side of the rift just below the fall. We were within 150 yards and they had not seen us. I sat behind a birch tree and gave Rupah the glasses. "The lowest one on the left has the biggest horns, and after him shoot the one directly above him," he said. I fired. No. 1 took three wild leaps and vanished into the gulf below the fall. The remainder stared at his amazing behaviour, for the roar of the water drowned the sound of the shot. I fired again. No. 2 turned and, walking into a bush-choked gully a few yards away, also disappeared from view. I thought that I had missed him. Then Rupah pointed out another as the biggest of the remaining four, and at my shot he emulated the Marcus Curtius-like leap of No. 1. Rupah began to mutter wild words about fairies and magic.

The three remaining tahr hesitated and No. 4 rolled down-hill with my bullet through his heart, and hung perilously near the edge of the chasm, only prevented from falling in by a small tree. No. 5 staggered to my shot as No. 6 fled; a second bullet brought him

A GOURAL IN THE SNOW.

TWO OF THE THAR SHOT IN KIJAR.

To face page 48.

to a standstill; a third and fourth and he hung in the middle of a bush. I shouted to Nawash Ali to go and "halal" him, and he raced for the fallen tree and scrambled across with Mangla, reaching the tahr just in time to prevent him slipping over the brink, and successfully performing the "halal".

Rupah and I followed across the pine-trunk, also slippery with spray, and reached the other two as they were hauling the last buck into safety. Suddenly Mangla gave an excited shout and pointed. There in the bushes lay No. 2, stone dead. He was the best of the three, 13½ inches, No. 4 measuring 13 inches, and the last one shot, 12¼. Having photographed two of them (there was not room anywhere to put the three together) we went along the bank to look for the single tahr which had fallen behind the prone tree-trunk. We reached the fallen tree and there was nothing. A long wisp of coarse hair marked the place where he had stood when I fired, but there was no trace of blood. We shouted across to where two of the coolis still sat, and they stoutly maintained that he had not moved. Rupah looked very worried, but suddenly his face cleared, and he said: "It is all right; the fairies have got him and the two which jumped into the river, so they have three and we have three. The sacrifice is made and all is now well."

I will not presume to try and offer a better explanation. Carefully we looked down into the seething torrent for traces of the other two, but found nothing, though we descended some yards down the precipices in several places. Returned to our dead bucks we cleaned them and carried them across the pine-trunk bridge, then bivouacked amongst huge boulders in a glade 200 yards above the fall.

In the morning I sent back the coolis to fetch the

remainder of the kit from Sunglali, and to bring another dozen men to move camp higher up the nullah. The morning was spent in skinning and cleaning the trophies, then, in the afternoon, we explored up-stream for a new camping ground, and found one some three miles up, after a weary struggle through thick undergrowth.

We moved there next morning by relays of my own camp coolis, and the following morning Rupah and I, accompanied by both Manglas, set out to look for ibex and bear.

A mile from camp we came on tracks of a serow, and some of his rufous black hair was stuck in the bark of a small tree against which he had rubbed. Then we found tracks of a bear just before we got on to snow. We were now some seven or eight miles from the entrance to the nullah, and I suddenly noticed that a big snow-slope ended in terraces, and it was obvious that under it were what had once been fields. The snow evidently covered the remains of a great landslide, which had obliterated most of the fields and probably the village at the top of them. So there was something in the old story of the wrath of the offended gods after all.

A mile or so further on a large side ravine opened on the east though no break had yet appeared in the western wall of rock.

We sat down on the snow to examine the hill at the junction. It rose in series of steps like a great pyramid, and on its western face Rupah spotted a herd of ibex almost as soon as he got the glasses up. I turned the big telescope on them, for when it comes to judging ibex heads I fancy myself. There were about twenty ewes and half-a-dozen bucks; two of them over 40 inches, one about 42, the other an inch less.

They had finished feeding and were lying down, so we surveyed the approaches carefully.

It would be a difficult climb, too difficult to tackle so late in the day, especially as there were clouds about and the wind would be tricky up above. So we watched and noted the easiest line of approach and the best feeding places, then rose and turned homeward, intending to be there at dawn next day. For, thought I, there is plenty of time as there is more than a month of my leave still to run. But even then Fate was waiting round the corner to trip me up.

We arrived in camp and found the coolis there with the rest of the kit, also the extra men who, I thought, would not now be wanted. With them was Nandu and my mail, and I eagerly seized the bag. The first thing my eyes fell on was a large official envelope marked " Urgent ". I ripped it open, and found in it orders for me to proceed at once to Somaliland to take up an appointment for which I had applied, but which I had not expected for another six months. I looked at the date of the letter, and it was just on a month old.

I discovered later on that a telegram had missed me at Islamabad by a few hours. A special messenger had been sent after me with it, but had perished in the snow on the Sinthan Pass. My mail had been sent round by the Banihal Pass, which is more than 2000 feet lower, but involved a detour of several marches to the south to reach the Chenab valley.

There was nothing for it now but to hurry back. Fortunately I had the full number of coolis and could start at dawn. I read my mail and idled most of the afternoon, having one good laugh at Punch's expense. With the coolis had come a fine ram with a view to his conversion into mutton for me. Now Punch as a rule

bullied all other animals even up to buffaloes, but feeling lazy scorned to notice the ram. Not so the ram. Punch strolled by and the ram gathered his feet under him, launched himself like an arrow and caught Punch full in the ribs, rolling him over and over. Punch rose with a growl and advanced to avenge the insult, but hearing me laughing, looked up with a half-ashamed, half-pleading expression and stopped doubtfully, wagging his tail. As I continued to laugh he walked sulkily away and sat down with his back to me to brood over his wrongs. I am afraid the ram's gallant effort did not save him, for he was mutton an hour later. During tea I came out of my tent to discover the reason of the constant fall of gravel on my tent. High above us on the lip of the precipice which rose sheer from the further edge of the stream, three tahr ewes were feeding, and the small stones they dislodged struck one projecting rock and then bounced into camp. They would take no notice at first of our shouts, and it was becoming such a nuisance that I was seriously considering firing a shot, when they moved away.

At dawn we left our " Fairyland ". I climbed on ahead of the coolis and sat down on the crest of the eastern shoulder to await their arrival. There was a small open plot in the forest just by me, and as I sat there quiet, pheasants began to come out and feed, until there was a gathering such as I have never seen elsewhere. Three gorgeous crested monal with glittering blue coat and orange and white tail : three long-tailed cheer, the nearest in appearance to our English pheasant of all the Himalayan species : some red-cheeked Kalij and two splendid specimens of the western trogapan with their vivid collars of blood-red, black and white. The while a snow-cock whistled

mournfully from a near-by rock. The coolis arrived and they scuttled away into the undergrowth, leaving me with a pleasant memory of the scene as my last souvenir of Paristan.

By noon we reached the river-bank below Sunglali, and though the temporary bridge by which we had crossed originally had been swept away, and we had to go round by the permanent bridges over the Bhutna and Chenab, we camped that evening opposite Sunglali, a march of twenty-three miles, much of it over the worst possible going. Next day we reached Lidráree, having to wade knee-deep in the rising waters of the Chenab at two points in our journey along the "lower road". The third day we reached Bagni and the fourth Kishtwar. I had decided to return by the Marbal Pass, which is the next to the south of the Sinthan, and a long march took us to a village on the near side of it. Next day we crossed without adventure. As we plodded up the snow on the east side, I noticed many crows flying northwards towards the Sinthan, and was told that there had been several accidents on the latter pass, by which men had lost their lives, and that was the reason of the crows' migration. We reached the village of Ghoon late that evening, having covered another twenty-one miles, and found that cholera had smitten the Islamabad district and many were dead or dying. It was twenty-three miles thence to Islamabad, and a drearier march I have never done. The first village we passed was deserted, and the coolis said that all the inhabitants had died but eight, and they had fled. At the next a band of wailing mourners, grouped round five corpses laid out for burial, rent the air with their lamentations. And so it was everywhere. At mid-day we stopped at a village whose inhabitants were boiling large cauldrons

of rice which they distributed to passers-by as an offering to avert the plague. My coolis fell to and made a hearty meal, the while a man taken with pangs of the disease cried in anguish from the house near which I rested. We travelled, as it were, in a cloud of settled gloom despite the sunny day, and I was profoundly glad to reach the squalid streets of Islamabad, and passing through, embark again on a doongah about 4 o'clock. Enlisting two extra men for the crew, an offer of bakshish for an early arrival in Srinagar induced the boatman to paddle hard down-stream all night, and, helped by the current, we arrived at 10 A.M. next day. A week later I was on the sea, and took with me to a very different country happy memories of "Fairyland", and a resolve, as yet unfulfilled, to return there again one day.

NILGIRI TAHR

"METTAPALAIYAM, Sahib", called my bearer in my ear, as we ran into a station in steamy, polysyllabic Southern India; and I rose, somewhat gummy-eyed with a night in the train from Madras, to change into the little cog-wheeled railway which climbs the Nilgiri Hills to that most beautiful of Indian hill stations—Ootacamund.

Leaving Mettapalaiyam, we traverse about three miles of flat country, then, clattering over the iron bridge which spans the picturesque Bhawani river, begin to climb.

At first through jungle interspersed with groves of slender areca palms, the most graceful of its race; then along a flower-bordered track thick with gorgeous butterflies, until the level of the coffee plantations is reached; so that we pass acres of glossy, dark green bushes interspersed with immense jhak trees, bearing rough-skinned fruits weighing thirty to forty pounds on their trunks. Valuable to the planter are these; although their sickly smell when cut open renders them far from being a dainty to the average European, yet the Indian devours them eagerly.

The original forest still clothes the greater part of the hills, and some of the creepers span such gulfs across ravines that it is difficult to understand how they first got across the gap.

Further up, at about the 4000 feet level, we come to the tea estates, the neat rows interspersed with feathery cinchona, and look across the valley at the great mass of the Halikul Drug jutting out above the plains. On the far side of it is " Tippoo's Seat " where, according to report, that genial ruler was wont to sit on a rock-carved throne, and watch prisoners pushed over the edge of a sheer three-hundred-foot cliff to be dashed to pieces for his amusement.

Up another thousand feet, and we reach Coonoor and a late breakfast, while from here onward we are in the land of eucalyptus and rhododendron.

A wonderful trip, and though the onward miles are deficient of the butterflies and flowers which delighted us lower down, yet there is an ever-changing view of round-topped hills to please us, until, in the middle of the afternoon, we run into Ootacamund station past two shining lakes and see by the station name-board that we are now over 7000 feet above sea-level.

It was the 20th of January when I arrived for a shooting trip, with the particular object of securing a specimen of a Nilgiri tahr, so there was a nip in the air when I set out two days later to ride fourteen miles to Avalanche dak bungalow.

The name, of course, immediately makes one think of snow-clad mountains, but snow does not fall in the Nilgiris, and the meaning is that it is the " awal anchi ", or " first stage ", on the road to Calicut.

A pleasant march through undulating country and valleys holding clear trout streams ; the hills rising up to another thousand feet on either side, their slopes of rock and grass heavily patched with dense " sholas " of rhododendron, ilex and tree-fern. These " sholas ", the local name for patches of forest, where the rhododendrons grow to 25 feet in height, have a dense under-

growth and afford shelter to big game, sambhar being much the most numerous species. The stags afford fine stalking when they come out to feed in the early mornings and evenings, but carry heads not nearly as fine as those of the Central Provinces and elsewhere : in fact a good head in the Nilgiris would hardly be shootable in the Central Provinces.

The little red barking deer also occurs, as do pig and leopard, while several tiger are shot every year within twenty miles of Ootacamund. Gaur also occasionally come up from the plains during the rains.

My principal objective, a Nilgiri tahr, is a wild goat, and consequently a dweller among the cliffs at the edge of the hills, and no frequenter of sholas.

Arrived at Avalanche and tea disposed of, a stroll up the nullah with the telescope was the programme.

A quarter of a mile brought us to the fish hatchery, where corpulent rainbow trout live in luxury, and some fine specimens were admired. The rainbow does very well in the Nilgiris and provides plenty of sport, but the brown trout for some unknown reason has quite failed to catch on, and all efforts to acclimatise them have failed.

Another half mile and we climbed a grassy spur, and lay down to watch the open spaces between the sholas above us for any sambhar which might come out to feed.

There were already a couple of sambhar hinds out grazing, and before we left they had been joined by five more and two stags. One of the stags would have been shootable but that half of one horn had been broken off.

The light was going and I had shut up the telescope, when Champanni, my shikari, pointed and said, "Black leopard". Sure enough there was a black animal

moving through the grass above the sambhar. Out came the telescope again, and great was my disappointment when the black leopard turned out to be a black Nilgiri langur. Not the only time one of these handsome monkeys had deceived me into thinking that I was at last going to bag a black leopard, which are fairly common in the Nilgiris ; though I have never succeeded in getting within range of one.

On the way home Champanni told me of his rough and tumble with a tiger a few years before, when he had gone into a shola to locate the wounded beast, and just got away with his life and three ribs bitten through.

Dawn found us perched on a high bluff, west of Avalanche, waiting for tahr to show on the cliffs below ; the baggage having gone round by another route practicable for the ponies. It was not more than a possible chance, as tahr usually only came there in the rains.

As the light grew there was revealed the curious spectacle of a sea of mist filling the valleys while an archipelago of hill-tops rose out of it.

The rising sun soon dispersed the mist but showed us only two fat sambhar hinds dawdling along the edge of a shola below us ; occasionally fastidiously nibbling an extra-succulent leaf, but evidently having finished the serious business of feeding for the day. No tahr appeared, so we walked on to camp across the hills for another four miles, pushing our way through some very dense sholas and thickets of wild guava on the way.

It was a typical Nilgiri camping ground. Hills of easy slope on either side of a grassy valley, with a clear stream running over a bed of rock and gravel. Dense sholas, mainly of rhododendron, from a hundred yards to three-quarters of a mile in extent filling the heads of the nullahs or patching the higher slopes, the tracts between covered with coarse grass and scattered bushes,

TAHR GROUND, IN THE NILGIRIS.

THE MIST SWEEPS UP THE VALLEY.

To face page 58.

with an occasional outcrop of grey rocks pushing up their heads amongst them. The hills to the west were the boundary of the Nilgiris, which on this side drop away almost straight down to the plains below in a great wall of cliffs stretching for many miles. These cliffs are almost unclimbable anywhere by man, and the greater number of tahr live on these and come up to graze morning and evening on the grassy slopes at the top, though a few are to be found on the higher hills of the interior of the plateau ; especially on the Kundahs, as the group of hills I was now entering are called.

About 2 P.M. thick mist began to stream up over the edge of the cliffs, and a climb up later in the afternoon only gave us glimpses of black wet rock through gaps in the drifting whiteness. Champanni, however, said he was quite certain that he had spotted a couple of tahr on the edge about half a mile to the south of us, just before we gave up and went down again to camp.

Next morning, the 24th, our boots crunched over thick hoar-frost on all the grass around as we left camp, and on attaining the crest of the cliffs we were met by a bitter gale in our faces as we struggled along northwards. The cold brought tears running down my cheeks, and it was impossible to hold the telescope steady to search for game. However, at about half-past nine it moderated, and, sitting on a commanding knoll, I soon picked up half-a-dozen tahr on the top of an outlying bastion of the hills : a sheer-sided lump connected by a narrow ridge to the main cliffs.

A nearer approach showed us only one small " brown buck " among them, and no " saddleback ", as the grizzled veteran with the light patch is called.

With the wind behind us we got back to camp by 11.30, and decided to move camp to a more sheltered

spot about four miles down the valley, called Bangi Tapalla.

Accordingly Champanni and I climbed to the edge of the cliffs again about 2 P.M., while the baggage ponies set off through the valley below.

We had hardly reached the top when the mist came whirling up, and reduced our tactics to a sort of hide-and-seek; as we had to sit down immediately it showed signs of thinning, then push on to another vantage point when it concealed us again.

We found tracks immediately at the spot where the shikari had said he had seen the two tahr the previous evening. Then we clambered down 200 feet of a steep gully, at the mouth of which were some small grassy patches on the lip of the cliff. Here were more tracks, and we peered cautiously over the edge at the ledges below, but all we could see through a gap in the mist was the water from the stream dissolving into spray on the tree-tops a thousand feet below.

Retracing our steps and climbing the opposite side of the ravine, in places unpleasantly vertical, we were again in the ragged mist-clouds, and through a thinner patch spotted some blurred forms on a hill-side three hundred yards away. Up swept more mist and they were blotted out. A sharp run up a stream-bed and the mist suddenly opened out again. After recovering my breath I cautiously pushed my head over the top of the bank to find wisps of cloud still drifting over the hill, but a herd of eleven tahr quite visible standing staring in our direction. They began to move off, obviously uneasy, but there was no old saddleback among them, though two were brown bucks; one of which would probably acquire the distinguishing patch next year.

They walked away into the haze which hung on the

crest of the next ridge, crossed and vanished. Champanni was for an immediate move, but I pressed him down with my hand on his shoulder, just as half the herd returned to stare back again from the crest; then, a couple of minutes later, vanished for good. It is curious how few Indian shikaris are up to this almost invariable trick of hill game, of coming back for one last look at the ground they have just quitted.

They had obviously been aware of something wrong, and, in view of the number of tracks about and the favourable appearance of the ground, it was better to clear right away for a few days rather than risk disturbing them for good; especially as it was possible that we had already disturbed others without seeing them in the mist. Accordingly we went straight inland from the cliffs and down to camp, a couple of miles away, where an evening walk after tea brought us on to the fresh tracks of a pair of tigers, though the beasts themselves were not to be discovered.

My sponge was frozen in the tent pocket when I rose next morning, and the valleys sparkled gloriously with the early morning sun on the frosted grass. We were to try for sambhar, with a possibility of tahr, though it was unlikely that we should see a good buck of the latter species. After searching for over four hours, we had seen forty-one hinds and one small stag. The latter was so soundly asleep, sheltered under the lee of a rock, that I walked up to within thirty yards of him in the open and sat down. Then, sitting behind a small bush, I made noises to wake him; beginning by whistling softly; crescendo; as loud as I could. No result. I talked loudly, and finally shouted; then he did raise his head. I spoke again and he rose slowly, then, looking sleepily about him, walked away to the next hill, about a hundred yards

distant, and lay down again : whereupon I left him in peace.

About 10 o'clock I sat down on top of a big hill and took out the telescope to prospect some likely ground for tahr, while Champanni wandered off with the glasses. I had seen nothing but three sambhar hinds, which came over a ridge into a shola below me, and was having a snack of food, when I saw Champanni performing some curious evolutions on the face of the opposite hill and to the right of the shola which the three hinds had recently entered. On putting up the telescope it was evident that he was trying to get back uphill out of sight of the shola. Then, examining the edge of the shola, I could just make out a sambhar stag half hidden in the bamboo grass on which he was feeding.

Taking the rifle, I got into a small nullah, which gave me cover down to the head of the shola where I met Champanni. He assured me that it was a big stag ; so, sending him back uphill to watch its movements, I started cautiously along the edge of the shola, coming on the stag about two hundred yards further down. He was stern on with his head invisible inside the cover, so I waited for a chance at his shoulder; but he suddenly walked straight inside, evidently suspicious. However, I thought he would probably put his head out again for a last look, and sure enough, after waiting about five minutes, out it came some fifty yards from me. I tried for the base of his neck and he nearly fell, but was hit above the spine and recovered to bolt into the cover. Running uphill to command the far side, I was just in time to put a bullet behind his shoulder as he cantered out, and he crashed head foremost into a narrow, bush-choked gully, where we found him so firmly stuck between

two rocks that we had partially to skin him and cut away a leg before we could haul him out. A very fair head for the district, but nothing very great.

It seemed that this beat was too full of hinds, while we had seen no tahr at all, so camp was shifted six miles on next day to a narrow glen, where two beautiful red mongoose came and played about twenty yards from me. They are fierce and destructive little poachers, and I would have shot them if I had had a gun with me. On the way some tahr ground was inspected and seven ewes seen, but no saddleback. The tigers had also shifted our way, as their tracks were all along the path by which we came.

The evening was blank, and though the next day showed several small stags and ten more tahr ewes were seen, yet nothing shootable was spied. As the big males usually live apart at that season, we again shifted camp, this time with a view to sambhar only.

A careless bit of stalking lost me a shot at a good stag in the morning, but the evening finished successfully.

About 4 o'clock we climbed a big hill to the east of camp, and descending half-way down a ridge on the further side, lay down on a commanding knoll with a view around us which might have been in the " Devon and Somerset " country.

At the bottom of the valley in front of us, a couple of miles of clear trout stream shone in the afternoon sun, while above it rose long slopes of grass and bush, with occasional outcrops of huddled grey rock. On the far side of the valley three large dark-green sholas blotched the upper hill-sides, their western halves bright with sunlight, their eastern in deep shadow. The middle one was shaped like the map of Spain and lay straight in front of us, while the other two, long and

attenuated, clothed the ridges half a mile on either side. Over my right shoulder, and about 300 yards distant, was another smaller shola, while straight below us, and on our side of the stream, was a flat, boggy patch on which the two or three black blots showed that sambhar were accustomed to come there to wallow : a strange amusement on those icy nights.

We had been there a short time when a small stag and two hinds came out of the shola in our right rear and began to graze towards us. They had covered about half the distance between us, when I saw that a stag had emerged from each of the three big sholas opposite, and that all three were moving in the direction of the stream below us. It was obviously necessary to frighten off the three close to us before the others got near enough to have the alarm communicated to them ; so I crawled round a big rock, and keeping under cover from the opposite side of the valley, jerked my handkerchief about to attract the attention of the unwanted beasts. They all looked up and the hinds turned to go away peacefully, but the stag was not satisfied and, trotting round behind a knoll above, came over the crest about thirty yards away. He pulled up short, had one short stare, then fled with a loud " bhonk ", which was just what I had wanted to avoid.

I was afraid that the other stags would have taken the alarm, but though they stopped feeding and gazed in our direction for a while, no harm seemed to be done and they soon resumed their downward progress.

The centre stag was a good one, so as soon as they were low enough I slipped into a near-by gully, and following it down, found myself within 400 yards of the two on the right, while the third was another 200 beyond them.

They were all close to the stream, and the nearer

two waded in and stood up to their bellies in pools. The problem was how to get within range of the centre stag without the one on his right spotting me and sending him off. The light was beginning to go and something had to be done immediately, when the right-hand and nearer stag helped me by getting out of the stream and moving up the bank to my right, until he was covered by the end of a low spur ; at the same time my selection also left the water and, moving on to the grassy flat, lay down in one of the wallows with only his head visible. At once I got into a muddy little runnel and crept along it, getting filthy dirty, until I was nearly within range, but suddenly realised that a turn of the channel had brought me into full view of the other stag on my right, which was bound to see me in a second or two. Bold measures were necessary, so I got out of my runnel and ran twenty yards towards my stag, sitting down on a hillock just as a loud "bhonk" rang out behind me. Up got my beast out of the wallow, and three seconds later was lying stone dead in it with a bullet through the base of his neck.

It was a strenuous and dirty business extracting him from the mud, but he had been worth it all, as he carried a good head, thick, well-shaped and heavily pearled.

It was pitch dark before we got the head off, and we had a weary plug up the hill, Champanni carrying the head and myself the rifle and all the rest of the paraphernalia. About two-thirds of the way up Champanni collapsed, saying that he felt sick and that his old tiger-wound was hurting him, so I pushed on to camp and sent out a couple of ponies to bring in him and the stag. It was nearly midnight before the cavalcade returned. Champanni had to be sent back

to Ooty next day on a pony, and said he would send out another shikari. I had a holiday, skinning and cleaning heads, sorting stores and generally getting things up to date.

The 30th was a blank and the weather broke that evening, so that I left camp on the 31st in thick mist and drizzle. This continued until about 10 o'clock, when we sat down to shelter under a big rock. About twenty minutes later the wind got up and drove the clouds from the opposite hill-side, revealing a fine stag lying down on big, flat rock about two-thirds of the way up. He was certainly the best stag I have ever seen in the Nilgiris, but a move was impossible, as we were right in front of him on an open slope. I watched him for about half an hour, and then the clouds came sweeping along the valley again, and I ran down under their cover as fast as I could. Having reached the bottom I set off up the other side on a line I had selected which would bring me to a knoll to the right of the stag's position. I had about 150 yards still to cover and was right out in the open, when, without the slightest warning, the mist suddenly cleared off again. I was only about 280 yards from the stag and it was impossible that he should not see me. He was on his feet immediately and I sat down to try a long shot. The bullet kicked up the dirt a few inches too low and he trotted off to stand again a few yards further on for a last look back. In the meantime I was struggling to reload but the cartridge would not go home, there being, as I found out later, a piece from the last case stuck in the chamber. Full ten seconds he stood and stared and then trotted over the shoulder of the ridge beyond and down into a great mass of sholas below. That was the last I ever saw of him, and two more days' looking and a bad stalk at another good stag deter-

mined me that it was time to return to the tahr and see if my luck had turned with them.

On February 3, therefore, I marched back to Bangi Tapalla, trying all the inland tahr ground on the way, but leaving the cliffs severely alone. Three herds of about twenty in all, but containing only ewes and young ones, were seen in the course of the long round we made, but the absence of a saddleback did not depress me unduly, as I was pinning my faith to the stretch of cliffs where we had played hide-and-seek in the mist on the 24th.

The new shikari had turned up, but seemed to know less about his job and be slower at spotting game than any one I have ever come across. I fancy he was merely some relation of Champanni's picked up in the Ooty bazar and come out in the hope of a soft job and good pay. However, it did not matter much, as I knew the ground now, and need only use him as a gun-bearer.

Dawn of the 4th was one of the coldest I have ever had. Lying amongst the rocks of some broken-topped knobs which commanded most of the tahr ground, the wind was so bitter that I could hardly hold the glasses still for shivering; while any turn to face the wind brought water streaming from my eyes and made it impossible to search.

At length I gave up trying to use the glasses and, sheltering behind a rock, wound a muffler round my face and trusted to my unaided eyesight.

I had got so cold that I was beginning to wonder if I could keep under cover any longer but must get up and walk about. The rising sun was just tipping the higher ground with light, when suddenly I spotted a couple of tahr move over a small ridge into the deep shadow of a hollow about 400 yards away, close to where we had first met the herd in the mist. There

was no time to distinguish sex, but one of them had appeared much larger than the other, and hopes rose high that they were buck and ewe. The cold was forgotten, and slipping down into a tortuous ravine, I made my way as fast as possible to where a small side nullah would take me up to a little hill crowned by an old survey cairn, which I thought would overlook the ground I wanted to see.

I arrived behind the cairn and lay there awhile recovering my breath, then, pushing over the safety catch of my rifle, I peered round the base of it. On the opposite slope of a small depression, and only 130 yards away, were eight tahr, and two of them were the long-sought saddlebacks.

Their heads went up as I looked, and there was evidently no time to lose with the wind as uncertain as it was ; so I let drive at what appeared to be the bigger of the two.

He staggered to the shot, but recovered and raced across my front to the left with the rest of the herd, trying to regain the harbourage of the cliffs. Another shot and he fell headlong, then slid kicking into a small clump of rhododendrons right on the brink of the precipice.

I ran as hard as I could, dived into the bushes and found him dead inside but still slipping and only a couple of yards between him and the edge. Luckily I always carry a large silk handkerchief, and I whipped it out and tied one hind-leg to a thick stem : then unbuckled the sling of my rifle and, taking a turn round a fore-leg, hauled him up a little and anchored him to a second stem. A very near thing ; if I had not been quick he would have slid over the edge and been smashed to pieces a thousand feet below.

When the shikari and cooli arrived we had a stiff

THE LAST CAMP.

THE "SADDLEBACK."

To face page 68.

job hauling him up into safety, but it was accomplished at last, and he was then carefully posed and his photograph taken. A fine thick head, 14¼ inches in length. He was exceptionally big-bodied and stood about forty inches at the shoulder, while I reckoned he would tip the scale at 200 lbs.

I had just finished the last photograph when the tinkle of the pony-bells came from the valley below, and the baggage appeared on its way to our original first camping ground. Hailing them, the spare pony was called for and with it arrived my Punjabi bearer, who had been on several shooting trips with me in the Himalayas.

He exclaimed on seeing the dead " kras ", which is the local name for the Himalayan tahr, and immediately remarked that it was smooth. This is, in fact, the principal apparent difference between these two species of goat ; for they are much of a size and have the same habits, while their horns are the same general shape ; but the Himalayan beast carries a long shaggy coat, while his southern cousin is smooth and short-coated.

A pleasant day was spent in camp preparing the trophy, and was enlivened by the sudden arrival of an enormous boar, which appeared from nowhere, ran past the camp about eighty yards away, and vanished into a thick shola before I could get my rifle. The coolis were very sad about it, as there is nothing they like better than pork.

A day's holiday ; a quiet march to Avalanche, where I missed a couple of wild dogs and saw a grand fight between two sambhar stags, then two days later I was back in Ooty, successful in the main object of the trip.

TSINE

TRACKING dangerous game is without doubt the highest form of the grand sport of big-game shooting. In saying this I infer that the sportsman himself takes an active part in the tracking, and is not merely content to be conducted along the trail by native trackers and then to let off his rifle on his quarry being pointed out to him ; thus debasing what should be a trial of skill and nerve to near the level of shooting at a target.

It is rarely possible for a white man to attain to the excellence in the art of tracking of some of the Indian jungle tribes, but the experience of two or three trips, and the application of common sense and the science of deduction, will bring him up to and past the level of the average village shikari.

And the fascination of it ! The bringing of every hard-won scrap of knowledge into play to decide upon the tracks when found. Whether they are fresh or old, or just so fresh as to be worth taking up ? Whether of old male or young male, small beast of one species or large one of another ? Then there come other problems. When did he last lie down ? Has he fed well ? Is he travelling, and how many hours is he ahead ; where is he going and when will he rest again ? All questions to which an answer can be obtained from the data supplied by the beast himself.

After that comes the following up of your beast

and the noting every sign which marks his progress. The torn spider-web, the bruised and blackening grass-blades, sap-exuding bough and trampled ant-hill; all make as clear a time-table as ever you will find in Bradshaw. Then as you get nearer: the tightening up of every nerve, the tense excitement of the last few moments, and perhaps a thunderous charge to meet and stop with cool head and steady shooting. Grand sport!

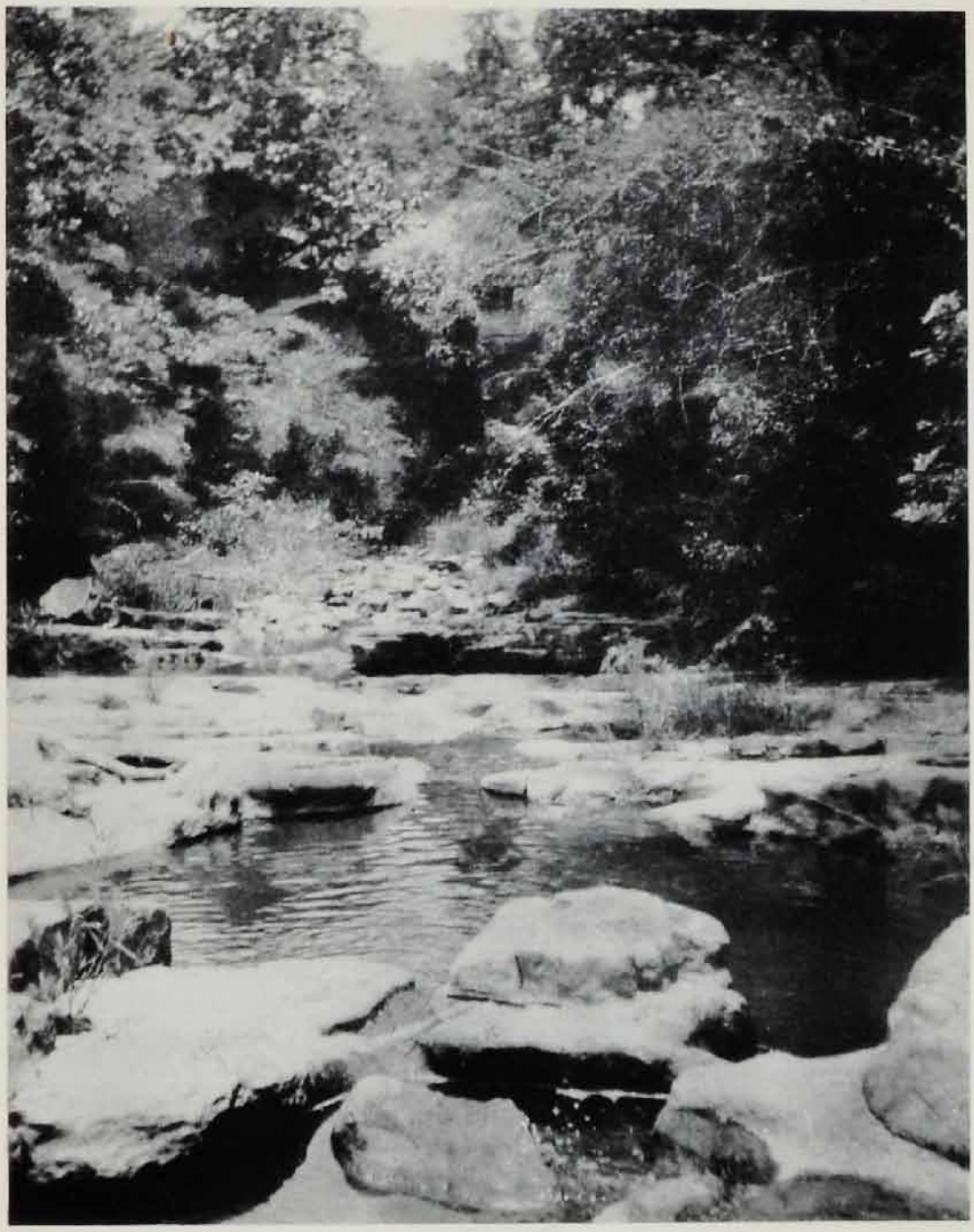
A long apprenticeship in India and Somaliland had given me a considerable knowledge of the game before I went to play it in the forests of Upper Burma. These forests of the "dry zone" are delightful hunting grounds. They clothe with an almost continuous growth the chain of low hills, known as the Pegu Yomas, which run north and south from below Mandalay to quite close to Rangoon. The northern half of these "Yomas" lies in the "dry zone", in which the rain-fall varies from about 75 inches to as little as 18. The trees are of many species, teak and banyan, "eng" (or bastard teak) and bamboo largely predominating. There is hardly a break in the forest, except where it walls in the rice-fields of an occasional jungle village, and it holds quantities of game. Elephant, tiger, leopard, bison, sambhar and barking deer, and last (but by no means least) the "tsine", who, to my mind, gives the best sport of all.

The "tsine" or "tsaing" is the wild ox of Burma, and the same beast as the banting (*Bos Sondaicus*) of the Malay States. He stands about 17 hands at the shoulder, is extraordinarily active for his great size, and an absolute master of cunning in the matter of keeping his horns for his own use instead of adorning a wall. Moreover, he may be a most dangerous beast when wounded, and once I was not only charged but hunted

by an unwounded bull, which I came on unexpectedly just as I had handed my rifle to a Burman preparatory to sitting down for lunch. The matter ended badly for the tsine, but that is another story.

An old bull varies in colour from (very occasionally) coal black to the hue of a withered oak-leaf; and I have seen them chocolate, French grey, and the rich bay of a copper beech. In youth he is the same colour as the cows of his kind, a bright reddish khaki. His horns, not being so massive, are not so fine a trophy as those of the bison, but they are much more difficult to acquire owing to the superior cunning of their owner.

A great difficulty in the hunting of the tsine is the general want of sporting instinct in the Burmans who accompany one into the jungle. They are very keen to get meat, but being of a timid nature would have you shoot a cow in preference to a bull, as being less dangerous. Then they give up very easily, being naturally indolent, and will tell you that you are double the distance from camp that you really are, in order to induce you to relinquish a pursuit which they no longer consider likely to be profitable. They have little idea as a rule what ground is most likely to hold game, and in default of recent information will persistently work a tract of country, quite regardless of the fact that the conditions of feed which brought the game there six months ago are no longer existent to attract them. Their knowledge of tracking is very sketchy too; for they seem unable to distinguish the age of tracks, and are quite wanting in that most necessary branch of the art, the ability to cut corners by making successful casts in the direction towards which a knowledge of the beast's habits assures you that he is making. There are good shikaris and trackers in Burma, but I have not met with one, and



A POOL IN THE FOREST.

To face page 72.

they are few and far between, whereas in a game district in India nearly every village can produce a man who is of invaluable assistance to the sportsman.

I had been after tsine for a month without bagging a big bull, and a couple of almost successful efforts and one success with a sambhar stag (all on obviously fresh tracks) had at first prevented me from realising the limitations of my Burman assistants, though I had realised the wiliness of the tsine. Once a herd had gone off with my bull packed tightly in the middle of it and well covered by beasts unworthy of a shot. A second time still worse had befallen me ; for, after a patient wait close to a small herd without being able to get clear shot at the bull, a wandering puff of wind had betrayed our presence and sent them galloping across our front. I waited for them to cross an opening in the forest some seventy yards away, and, as ill fortune would have it, pulled trigger on the bull just as a cow raced across him from behind, and, taking the bullet low down in her shoulder, had to be followed for a mile and a half before I could despatch her.

Time after time I had got on to fresh tracks only to be defeated by the bull tsine's habit of lying down for half an hour between seven and eight in the morning before feeding on again for another two hours or so. They always select a spot from which they can see or wind their back tracks, and a series of crashes through the jungle is all you hear of them. Then lately we had a break in the rains and my Burman soi-disant tracker had twice persisted, in spite of argument on my part, that tracks were quite fresh which, after wasting the most valuable part of the morning on them, had proved twenty-four hours old. Without experience of soil and climate one does not like to override the dictum of the local authority on such matters, but now after

several fruitless days of no tracks at all I had determined to run my own hunting entirely, and assign " walking on " parts to the Burmans.

About a fortnight before, in the course of tracking a tsine who proved to be changing feeding grounds and likely to travel twenty-five or thirty miles without a stop, I had come across a valley some six miles from the village of Shweban which I had made my base. This valley provided the attractions of running water, plenty of grass in one or two small open spaces, and a comparative scarcity of biting flies. There had been plenty of old tracks in it, and thinking the temporary drought might have brought one or two solitary bulls back to it, I determined to camp there for a few days.

Accordingly I despatched my belongings to a small clearing which contained the ruins of a bamboo hut, evidently at one time the temporary residence of a prospector in search of teak. The same morning I set forth with Maung Ba, the soi-disant tracker, and two other Burmans, to search the lower half of the valley. We found plenty of old but no fresh tracks ; at which I did not feel disappointed, as I expected to find a bull at the head of the valley, where he would be less likely to range far, and that ground I was leaving till the next morning when I would be able to get on to it by sunrise, and so try and get up with my bull while he was yet feeding. We got into camp at mid-day and found the tents pitched and all ship-shape, so I had a good lunch and a walk round in the evening along a fire-line and back by the jungle path on the chance of picking up some information, but saw nothing but sambhar and leopard tracks, and of course the ubiquitous barking deer.

Next morning, after a generous breakfast (I hold that no man should go big-game shooting who cannot

do justice to a meal at 4 A.M.), we started as soon as there was light enough to see our way, and pushing through the tangled undergrowth of the river-bed, turned north-eastward and began to work the bottoms of the little side ravines where tracks would show clearly in the softer earth, beneath the shade of teak and mango and giant bamboo. The light of the rising sun was catching the topmost leaves of the trees above us when we found the tracks of a big bull printed clearly but not deeply on a patch of stiff greasy clay. Now such soil is the hardest of all on which to tell the age of tracks; for the impress remains clear-edged and untouched by insects for a much longer time than it would in quicker drying soil. After close examination we decided to follow them, I maintaining that they were twenty-four hours old, while Maung Ba asserted that they were those of yesterday evening; in the latter case they were worth following, in the former they were not. They led us straight up a spur whose sun-baked surface showed no more than faint scratches here and there. It took us an hour to carry the trail to the top of a ridge which I knew branched off in innumerable spurs, along any one of which our bull might have descended to the valley, but here at last we found some sign to go by. Alongside the tracks were a couple of droppings such as a travelling bull will sometimes shed. Now these were undoubtedly not less than twenty-four hours old, but Maung Ba pointed out some week-old tracks and asseverated that the dropping had been left by the tsine which had made them.

The difference between bovine droppings, originally fairly dry, which had fallen on hard soil and been lying in the sun a whole day or a week is not very great, as insects usually attack and half destroy them in the

first few hours, and little change takes place till a shower of rain ends their cohesion. They are quite different to the great mass left by a bull before and after grazing, and the age of which can be told with accuracy and ease. Nevertheless I persisted, after breaking one with my boot, that they were twenty-four hours old and had been left by our bull. Again I pointed out small differences in the tracks which seemed to me to prove them also of the same age, but Maung Ba was vehement that the track was last night's and the droppings old, and that within the hour we would strike his fresh tracks of this morning. Finally I gave in to him and we went on puzzling them out.

Unfortunately the bull had not fed, but had walked steadily along the bare earth of the ridge-top, so there were no broken branches or bruised blades of grass to help us. At 11 o'clock there was obviously no further chance of finding him feeding, so I stopped to eat a few biscuits and rested half an hour; then went on again to find, after another furlong, that he had turned down a side spur in the direction of the valley from which we had originally come.

Now the downhill tracks became plainer, we passed a long scratch caused by the bull slipping on a tree-root, and I became more and more certain that he was twenty-four hours ahead of us. Then we reached the bottom of a ravine down which trickled a small stream, and there, on a flat piece of ground from which grew a grand teak tree, were, first a mass of ordure undoubtedly a day old; secondly, the smooth-pressed earth and deep sidelong scratches of his hooves marking the bull's mid-day resting-place of yesterday; and lastly, another mass of dung obviously dropped the previous evening before he moved off to feed again. I traced the trail

to where it began to mount a spur of the next big ridge, and then telling Maung Ba to make for camp, I added that I should give him no pay for his waste of time. He retorted that he would come out no more, obviously thinking himself indispensable, and I called to mind an incident which had befallen me some ten years before, and which happened thus.

I first learnt to track from a Mussulman shikari of the Punjab Salt Range, where I used to go to shoot oorial, as the wild sheep of those hills is called in the vernacular. He pointed out to me the difference between the blunt-toed impression of the ram and the narrower print left by the ewe, and taught me to pick out the more regular marks of the oorial's feet where he had mixed his trail with that of the village sheep, left by them when driven to or from their grazing grounds. Much kindred lore he had imparted, and then on my third trip with him he suddenly struck for more pay. Now I had paid him the full amount that was customary and given him liberal bakshish for good heads brought to bag, so I refused his demand, and when he declared his intention of not coming out next day I determined to have a try for a ram without him.

Next morning before sunrise I was at a pool where the oorial were wont to drink an hour before dawn. Examining its muddy margin I picked out the most promising set of tracks, carried the line for a couple of miles over the hills, and having jumped my ram in a small scrub-filled ravine, tumbled him down the hill as he stood for a moment to gaze before making a final bolt of it.

Before the ram had been carried into camp, shikari Bakshi was proffering his services at the original scale of pay; an offer which I accepted with concealed

relief, for I knew that I had been much favoured by fortune.

Now, once again I was up against the same proposition, but I had ten more years' experience of many different beasts to aid me, and I knew that I should need every scrap of knowledge I had acquired to avoid failure with my present most wary quarry.

Up to the point where we had left the bull's tracks we had travelled in a semicircle, and were not more than three miles from camp, so within an hour I was sitting down to a good lunch. Then as I came out of my tent I was greeted by a peal of thunder and found the sky to the south-east black with fat rain-clouds. Shortly there came a fury of flickering lightning, the rattle and crash as of an intensive bombardment and the drumming of a glorious downpour of rain on the leaves of teak and banyan and other broad-leaved trees. In less than an hour the storm had passed away save a few mutterings over the hills to the north-west, and I was enjoying a cool breeze which set all the rain-drops on the leaves dancing in the clear sunlight and brought miniature shower-baths pattering down from the creeper-draped columns of the lofty cotton trees.

I lay in a deck chair and pondered over the influence of the storm on my chances of success next day. There was no doubt that on the whole it was the best thing that could have happened. True, it would wash out any tracks the bull had made up to the present, but then he had travelled far without feeding, and would almost certainly have settled down last night to fill himself with the grass on the top of the ridge to which his tracks were leading when I had left them. I knew that there was good grazing there, for the tops of the side ridges were fairly open, while along the main

crest ran a broad fire-line which I knew held plenty of fine grass. My bull would probably feed in the vicinity of this for several days, and I hoped by trying along the fire-line to strike his hoof-marks of this evening printed deep in the rain-soaked soil. On one thing I was quite determined, and that was to work at the highest possible speed, for I would have little chance of a shot if I were not up with him by 10 o'clock ; for by then he would have finished his morning feed and be lying down for the day. There was a risk of his feeding back on his tracks and so meeting him unexpectedly, but nothing venture nothing have.

In any case to-morrow would settle the matter one way or another, and as the storm had moved north-east I gave orders for camp to be moved back to Shweban next day, as I proposed trying the ground to the north of the village while it was still soft and would show tracks.

Maung Ba was still sulking as I left camp in the grey light of early dawn, so I took along another Burman instead of him, to help carry the various impedimenta such as lunch and camera.

It was a lovely morning and the doves were cooing contentedly in the depths of the banyan trees, while parrots shrieked and shot across the valley like green rockets. Near by a barking deer protested loudly that a leopard was somewhere about, and from the far distance the trumpet of wild elephants sounded thin and faint. We pushed through the high "kaing" grass which fringed the banks of the stream, then plunged into the gloom of the dense forest clothing the lower slopes, and, travelling as fast as we could, in forty minutes we reached the spot where we had left the bull's tracks the previous day.

Here I made an unwelcome discovery. I turned

to the Burman behind me who carried my bandolier, in order to push my usual three cartridges into the magazine, since it was now light enough to shoot. To my astonishment the bandolier only contained five cartridges instead of fifteen. I remembered that I had seen my orderly cleaning the cartridges the previous evening, and he had evidently forgotten to replace most of them. However, I always put a spare packet in a haversack carried by the tiffin cooli, so I was not particularly worried by the shortage until I discovered that he had brought along a similar haversack belonging to my orderly, which he had picked up by mistake, and which only contained cleaning materials. This was a distinct shock, but it was too late to send back and I would have to be careful how I expended my five cartridges.

I may say here that I always give as much as possible to my coolis to carry, and only take the rifle and field glasses myself. A white man is at a great disadvantage with a native in getting through thick jungle, and it is very necessary to handicap the latter so as to prevent them pushing on ahead and disturbing game, as well as to give the European every advantage in a tropical climate. Consequently I only carried my bandolier when on quite fresh tracks, and on this occasion, after pushing three cartridges into my magazine, I left the bandolier containing the other two with the Burman whose duty it was to follow next after me.

We pushed on up the ridge as fast as we could, so when we reached the crest my shirt was black with sweat although the sun had only just risen. Here we struck the end of the fire-line, and we had not gone a quarter of a mile along it when I marked a trail of trampled grass, and lifting the overhanging blades found the footprints of my bull deeply impressed on

the soft earth underneath. A quick examination showed that they had been made during the tail end of the storm and that he had then been travelling in the direction from which we had come. If my theory was right he must have fed back along the fire-line, and on crossing to the other edge of it I found his return journey clearly marked. Full speed ahead, and we pushed on along the tracks until we reached the highest point of the ridge, where its biggest spur diverged from it. Here I noticed that his outgoing and returning tracks crossed each other, and the outgoing looked as if he had come from the direction of the spur, whereas his return tracks went straight on up the fire-line. I had an inspiration. Perhaps he had fed back finally to the point he had originally come from ; so I crossed over to the junction of the spur. Triumph, I was right, and had cut a corner with some success. Cautiously we pressed on along the double track : he had a full belly last night and might be close. The top of the spur was fairly open and sloped gently away, but twisted a little, so that we came suddenly into view of a small clear space with a ruined ant-heap in the middle. From forty yards away I could see that he had tumbled it in fragments with his horns ; and, on coming nearer, two great smooth patches of hard-pressed earth showed where he had taken his rest. The first was of yesterday at noon ; but the second was made last night, and from it led away this morning's fresh tracks with a mass of fresh dung beside them. He had evidently slept late, but I could afford to travel fast for another twenty minutes, and did so. We covered another mile, mostly through bamboo jungle, and then caution made us slow down ; for it was 7 o'clock and he might be lying down. Half a mile, three-quarters of a mile, and the tracks turned down a little side spur. Odds on

his being somewhere near. Cautiously I trod, covered fifty yards, came round a bush and froze stiff:—twenty-five yards away a great yellow back and a grand horned head showed above a low mound. He was awkwardly placed for a shot, as he was lying on the far side of it and his shoulder was not showing, while the flies made him toss his head continually. While I hesitated where to place my bullet, some sixth sense warned him of danger, for his head suddenly swung round and he stared straight at me. As he rose I let drive behind his shoulder and over he rolled. Up he struggled again at once and I had a try for his neck as he rose, but missed the spine, doing little harm. He plunged a few yards down-hill, whipped round and started towards me, my third taking him in the chest and staggering him as he turned, but he came on again. Then I found that I had forgotten to take the bandolier from the Burman, who turned to flee. I grabbed him by the shoulder; swung him round and snatched a cartridge from the bandolier. Fortunately the hill had slowed the bull, but he was within five yards when I fired, and he crashed down at my feet, to lie still breathing convulsively, a bullet through his right eye. Although (as I discovered on skinning the head) the right lower portion of his brain was nothing but blood and pulp, he continued to breathe, and I used my fifth and last cartridge on the back of his neck to finish the business.

Down from the trees came my three Burmans and we admired him together. "A grand lot of meat", thought they, and "a grand pair of horns", thought I. Then came the turn of the tape and camera. $29\frac{1}{2}$ inches along the curve of the horn, $15\frac{3}{4}$ inches round the base, and, chief glory of all, $41\frac{1}{2}$ inches across the horns. It was half-past seven when I fired the last shot, so it had

THE HEAD COMES HOME.

To face page 82.

taken me two hours and three-quarters from the time I left camp to bag my bull. I measured his height at the withers and made it 16 hands 1 inch, and then we cut off the head. It was a great weight slung on a stout bamboo, so I made a regular Christmas tree of myself with all the small impedimenta, such as camera, haversack, water-bottle, tiffin-basket, etc., leaving the three Burmans free to carry the head back to Shweban.

We started off and almost immediately had a small adventure, nearly walking on a large green Pit-viper (*Lachesis gramineus*), which was almost invisible in the long green grass. This handsome snake is very plentiful in Burma, and its bright emerald colour makes it very hard to see in grass or a bamboo, amongst whose leaves it is very fond of concealing itself. Shortly after this incident we descended the western flank of the ridge and began to make our way down a narrow ravine much encumbered with fallen trees, over which the head of the bull was lifted with difficulty. Then the stream-bed widened a little, and we walked on firm soil under an arch of lofty greenery through which the sun penetrated in long shafts of chequered light. The Burmans had just put the head down to rest themselves, when one of them suddenly pulled my sleeve and pointed. Eighty yards away a sharp bend in the stream carried it round a small flat promontory of land some twenty yards in width, and covered with bamboos. These were shaking violently. Then a cow tsine walked into full view, and after her came a fine bull. They stood and listened, evidently ill at ease. The bull was in clear view back to his last rib, and I gazed at him without a cartridge for my rifle. His horns were not quite so long and wide as those we carried, but they were more massive and would have made a grand trophy to hang alongside of them. A slight puff of

wind on the back of my neck, two plunges, a succession of crashes growing fainter till the forest was silent once again, and they were gone. Never have I had such an easy, unlooked-for opportunity. 'Twas ever thus. Three hours of pushing through tangled undergrowth and stumbling along boulder-heaped ravines brought us to a small patch of deserted fields which lay some three miles from Shweban and our toil was nearly ended, for here we enlisted the services of a couple of stray Burmans and I pushed on along the path to the village and there told the tale of triumph. By the time I had finished my third big lime-squash (the first two fairly sizzled as they went down) the whole village was turning out to welcome the head in, and, more particularly, to find out where the carcase lay, that they might go and bring in baskets of meat, cut into strips to be dried on lines in the sun.

That evening I lay in a deck chair and contentedly watched the fire-flies dance as I finished the bottle of champagne which I keep for great occasions. Not since I had bagged a fine markhor some eight years previously had I secured a trophy of which I could feel so justly proud.

LUCK

"LUCK" is probably the most luridly adjectived and wrongfully abused word in the whole of the sportsman's vocabulary.

We all know the man who, having violated every canon of stalking law, and been watched with stupefied amazement by his quarry throughout the whole eccentric career of his attempted approach, bitterly reviles his "luck" when the beast's outraged feelings finally overcome it, and it flees in indignant surprise at his effrontery.

Most good men after big game are spoken of as "lucky" by the more ignorant and envious of their would-be emulators, who do not take into account the hardly-won experience which eventually evolves an instinct for doing the right thing in an emergency, which is the factor so often turning what is almost a failure into a brilliant success.

I have found on thinking over my failures in pursuit of big game, which nine times out of ten I have at first stigmatised as "rotten luck", and the tenth time admitted to be due to my own inaptitude, that the proportion is really about the other way on, and that I can fairly put down only one in ten to sheer bad luck. There is nearly always something left undone that I ought to have done, and something done that I ought not to have done.

"Good luck" might be paraphrased as "unearned increment", and "bad luck" as undeserved loss accruing through what they call in the insurance policies "the hand of God".

As an instance of the first I might give the case of a horse gunner officer who was travelling to Astor to shoot markhor some fifteen years ago. The march after the Burzil pass, a fine old buck, who was evidently changing feeding grounds, walked across the road in front of him, and was duly shot. The sportsman, having acquired a 49-inch pair of horns, promptly turned his back on the arduous and expensive Astor district, and went elsewhere in search of other species of game.

As an example of bad luck hard to beat, I would quote the experience of a friend of mine who was shooting up the Nubra Valley in Ladakh the same year as the last-mentioned episode occurred. He had spotted two grand ibex, and was making the final approach which would probably have given him both heads. On slipping round the last rock he almost stepped on a snow leopard, which had also been stalking the same beasts. The leopard promptly whisked round a corner out of sight of the sportsman but in full view of the ibex, who also stood not on the order of their going. To lose two fine ibex and a snow leopard, which is a beast he had never seen before and will probably never see again, all in one short moment, was "'ard, bloomin' 'ard".

But can you class all your failures in the same unchallenged category? I think not.

One speaks of the great bull bison which he lost through the bullet being turned by an intervening bough.

But could he not have waited till his shoulder showed clear of obstruction?

Then another, of the patriarch barasingh whose head would now grace your walls but for the tiffin cooli being seized with an untimely fit of coughing.

But why had he allowed the tiffin cooli up with the stalk? A brother of the angle instances that disastrous trip on which he lost innumerable immense mahseer through hooks breaking.

But did he buy those hooks from a reliable maker who supplies specially strong ones to withstand the first grand rush of that mighty fish?

Such instances might be multiplied indefinitely, and probably the eventual verdict would be that good luck predominates over the undeserved bad.

But there sometimes comes a day when the luck is so mixed that it is hard to decide, on thinking it over, whether it was fortunate or not. Of such do I recall a Punjab autumn day, when, having put up at a small dak bungalow, I strolled down with a rod in the evening to the stream which flowed a mile below it, to see if I could stir a fish or two. A mere ten-foot shallow rivulet as a rule, at times it broadened to a deep still pool under clayey cliffs where the rock doves dwelt and cooed gently from shadowed ledges during the heat of the day. I knew nothing of the presence of mahseer in this water, but merely intended to try a few casts at any likely-looking spots.

It was getting dusk when, having so far met with no sign of a fish, I knelt on a huge flat-topped rock full eight feet above the water to try a few final throws into the swirl below the stream's entrance to the pool. Nothing stirred and I reeled in lazily from the last cast of the evening with my spoon dragging on the top of the water and my thoughts already wandering to the chikor roasting for my dinner.

Of a sudden there came a torpedo-like rush, a broad

scaly back broke water for an instant, and there followed a savage pluck at my spoon. But I, whither did I go! I lost my balance; jerked up the rod-top, so breaking the trace; and fell headlong into the pool on top of that doubtless astonished fish, crawling out on the bank a minute later to endure the ill-suppressed giggles of the two stalwart villagers who had accompanied me, to carry home the catch, forsooth! Life has many bitter moments, and I thoroughly cursed the fish, the villagers, the time, the place, the country and the universe; till, later in the evening, soothed by an excellent dinner and mellowed by a large bottle of beer, I began to reflect less stormily on recent happenings; till finally the barometer of mood began to rise to "Fair" as hope for the morrow grew. For had I not moved a fine fish, and if there was one there must be more, and was not the morning notoriously a better time for fishing than the evening at that time of year? Before turning in I made preparations and issued instructions for another try on the morrow, with the result that I returned to the bungalow for lunch with seven good fish borne on a pole behind me by one of the (I admit justifiably) hilarious villagers who had been with me the previous evening; so that I marched on that afternoon well content with life in general.

On reflection I am not sure that I see the entire appositeness of my tale as an elaboration of my theme, but never mind.

It is said that misfortunes never come singly, and certainly at times they seem to breed like flies once they get started, as I hereby call all to witness by the following tale of sorrow.

I was stationed at Chakdara one cold weather, and almost daily used to fish the Swat river, whose

RESULT OF AN EVENING'S FISHING ON THE INDUS ABOUT 30 MILES ABOVE LEH.

To face page 88.

turbulent water hurries past the fort walls under the girder bridge which carries the Chitral road and links the wild country round the famous Malakand Pass to the even less settled districts north of the river. After tiffin one day I sallied forth accompanied by my orderly to try for some snow trout and chirroo in a pool a couple of miles down-stream. Arrived there it was not till I hooked a good fish of three or four pounds that I discovered that Ghulam Mahomed, usually most reliable in such matters, had left the landing net behind. With difficulty I drew the tired fish into a small stony bay whence the orderly tried to lift it out. But as he laid hands on it, the trout gave one last plunge, the hook came away and my fish slid back into deep water. Ten minutes later I got into a small fish, played him to a standstill and again towed him carefully into shallow water. This time Ghulam Mahomed was determined not to be late and made a determined pounce, emerging with the fish firmly grasped in both hands and a tail hook of the flight embedded in his finger. I cut the hook free of the flight and sent him back to hospital to have it extracted, then I went on fishing. Quarter of an hour later I drew an exhausted two-pounder on to the end of a shelving rock, then bent down carefully to lift him out by the gills with my left hand, meanwhile keeping a strain on him by stretching the rod upward and backward with my right. At the crucial moment my foot slipped, I sat down violently, snapping the rod-top with the sudden jerk, the hook came free, and away went my fish. Then I went home to tea.

After tea I thought I would try for an evening flight of duck, and set out with my gun and a sepoy carrying, as I thought, a haversack full of cartridges. As I left my room I picked up four loose cartridges off the table

and put them in my pocket. Arrived at some stunted willows by a small jheel a mile and a half out, we crouched behind them and waited. Soon a bunch of teal whizzed by and my right barrel brought down two, while the left scored a handsome miss. It usually does at flighting teal, as they arrive so suddenly and travel so fast that I am nearly always taken slightly unawares and am too late to score with both barrels, or quite often, I regret to say, with either. Then strings of duck began to appear in several directions against the darkening sky, and prospects looked very promising. Shortly three mallard slid down out of the heavens to my little patch of water, and one remained in answer to my second barrel. Then I turned to my henchman for more cartridges ; he opened his haversack and discovered that it contained my leaded cast-net.

That night at dinner the khitmatgar spilt gravy on my mess-jacket ; I upset a glass of port on the dining-table, spoiling a clean cloth and breaking the glass ; and after dinner I lost three rubbers of bridge in rapid succession, in two of which my partner revoked. I then retired to bed feeling that Job had nothing much to complain about, in fact, was an inveterate grouser at quite minor annoyances.

Of course the captious will point out that I am confuted out of my own mouth and that most of these misfortunes could have been avoided by care on my part ; such as inspecting the paraphernalia carried by the orderly before starting. But when one does the same thing daily, and with the same man to help one, I think that any unexpected vagaries on his part may be classed under the " hand of God " clause.

But fortune sometimes turns her frowns to smiles in the most unexpected fashion, and she certainly gave

with no niggard hand the day I bagged that grand burrhel, whose head hangs on my wall.

It was a July day, fifteen years ago, when I camped at nearer 17,000 than 16,000 feet in an out-of-the-way nullah up the Shyok river in Ladakh. At dawn next day we left camp, and trying up a side valley we halted just below the snow-line, some 500 feet above our starting-point, and spied the lower slopes of a great mass marked 20,300 feet on the map. Soon I picked up a small band of six burrhel rams resting high up on a patch of rocks amongst the snow. They had evidently been frightened by something, probably a snow leopard, or they would have been feeding lower down at that hour. Their position was quite impregnable unless I could reach the head of a small gully which seamed the mountain-side 150 yards on the far side of them, starting from the crest of the western of the two big ridges which ran down from summit to base of the mountain at their back, and on the eastern of which we were lying. To reach this gully would necessitate crossing the snow-fields high above them and involve a most arduous climb. But there was one grand head among them for which I would do and suffer much; so, taking one of the two Tibetans with me, and leaving the other and the Kashmiri tiffin cooli to watch the rams, I started to climb the eastern spur on the side farthest from them.

The ascent was nowhere very difficult in itself, but the altitude made it trying from the outset. Steadily plodding we gained a thousand feet, then tried to cross the snow; but we sank to our waists in the first few yards and there was nothing for it but to try higher up. Again and again, and higher and higher we tried for a crossing; but everywhere we tried the surface would not hold us, and we floundered in loose and

powdery snow which flew in clouds about us. And ever as we went higher the air grew thinner till at last I had to stop every ten yards to ease my sobbing lungs. I became terribly thirsty and foolishly tried to assuage it with snow, making it ten times worse, so had to rest for half an hour on the bare rocks of the ridge. Finally, when within little more than a hundred feet of the summit, a long shelf of rock appeared slanting away from us and joining the ridge to the western one. It was now past mid-day, and I stopped to gaze at the wonderful view to the north of us ; for we were at a little over 20,000 feet, and the great barrier of the Mustagh range stretched from end to end of the northern horizon on the far side of the Shyok Valley. From the 24,000 feet Kundun Peaks on the east, to the stupendous mass of the 28,000 Godwin Austen on the west, spire and cone, square keep and jagged sentinel fringed the skyline ; not one of them under 20,000 feet, and from the map which I carried I identified fourteen peaks of over 24,000 feet in height. Some of them I already knew, such as Masherbrum, under whose 25,600 feet of cloud-flecked grandeur I had already camped for a month ; while I was yet to make the acquaintance of the bitter winds which sweep down from the ice-filled valleys of the Kundun giants. One thing struck me. I had already heard rumours from the Baltis of the Hushé Valley, of the existence of a pass which led from the Saltoro over a big ice-field and then over a *second* chain known as the Aghil mountains to the Chinese side of the watershed. They said that this ice-field continued to the head of the Nubra Valley, and if this was so it must be the Siachen glacier, which must extend much further north-west than shown on the map, and the main watershed consequently must be a great deal further north. From

where I sat I could see quite clearly the course of the Nubra Valley, and it seemed to me that the Baltis must be right; for there looked to be a great transverse depression extending from the head of that valley north-westward nearly to Gasherbrum; and on the far side of which lay the main chain. But appearances are nowhere more deceptive than amongst big mountain ranges, so I did not think very much more about it till three years later I read in the *Field* that Longstaff, Neve and Slingsby had proved the truth of the Baltis' tales, and a few hundred square miles of snow and ice and rock had been added to British territory.

It was a wonderful prospect, and I turned my back on it with regret to essay the descent of the western spur. We traversed the long rock shelf without difficulty, for what snow had not been blown off it was hard and firm, and we soon gained the arête leading down to the little gully for which I was making. Half-way down I climbed out on a projecting crag and surveyed the ground below. The burrhel were still there and seemed quite at ease. Having carefully noted the spot where the gully led off, I returned the glasses to their case, and recommenced the descent. It was difficult to avoid coming on to the skyline in some places, as the snow was very soft, having had a hot sun on it all the morning, and we started a couple of small avalanches rushing down the slopes. Arrived at a small rock-needle, which I had marked as being some thirty yards above the point where I would have to cross the ridge, I had one more careful look at my quarry. They were still there, but two were standing and looking up towards the ridge above me, evidently disturbed by the sound of the avalanches I had started: however, one lay down again as I watched, so I slipped back, and

making my way a little further down I crawled over the ridge and into the long-desired shelter of the gully. But here a fresh difficulty arose. The shady bottom of it was full of soft powdery snow, drifted into it by the wind, in which I sank hip-deep. Slowly I ploughed through it till I was twenty yards from the spot where I expected to get a shot. Something made me look up suddenly, and there, on a knoll 200 yards above me, stood my six rams staring straight at me. Some chance eddy must have warned them. I was deep in snow, and blowing like a grampus, but it was now or never for the shot, for it was obviously my last chance. My foresight waved wildly up and down and it seemed as if I could never get steady enough to fire, but at last I pulled trigger on the big one. He leapt a dozen feet down-hill, then bolted headlong into a small depression, followed by the others. They reappeared like a string of jumping silhouettes crossing the ridge down which I had come, and each showing for a couple of seconds. Four passed, and then after an interval a fifth appeared. There was no time to use the glasses and I thought this was my beast and fired. Down he came on his knees and scrambled up again as the sixth and last dashed past him. Alas ! this was the big one, and they were both out of sight over the ridge before I could get in another shot. I toiled back to the ridge and perched myself on a rock with the glasses. Level with me four specks sped across the head of the valley to the opposite hills, while far above me two rams walked slowly but steadily upwards and away from me across the snowfields. The leader was my big ram, while the other also carried a decent pair of horns and was undoubtedly hard hit, the big one being evidently no more than deeply grazed. As I watched they halted ; the smaller lying down, while the other stood and gazed back the

way they had come. I waited for half an hour ; then, as they did not move, I made one last effort, hoping at least to finish the smaller ram. But long before I got within shot they moved off again, and as it was near sunset I had to leave them.

Wearily I toiled down the valley to where I met my tiffin cooli and the other Tibetan. It was over thirteen hours since I had had food or drink, but I was too tired to do more than swallow a biscuit and a little water ; then we plodded on down the valley, a flurry of snow suddenly driving down off the mountain to cheer us on our way. At last I got into camp, worn out and dispirited, before it was quite dark, after fourteen and a half hours' hard work.

A cup of hot tea did wonders ; then some soup carried on the good work and made me think seriously of dinner. Soon I was eating ravenously and feeling a new man. After dinner I gave orders for a late start next day to look for the wounded rams, expecting to find the small one dead, but little hoping ever to set eyes again on the big one ; then I retired to bed, hardly succeeding in undressing without falling asleep.

Refreshed by nine hours' log-like slumber, I rose to a good breakfast and left camp comfortably an hour after sunrise. By 10 o'clock we had reached the head of the valley without seeing a sign of the wounded beasts. Suddenly one of the Tibetans pointed to a small blot on a snow-field, three-quarters of a mile away. I sat down with the telescope and examined it, eventually making it out to be two wolves busily engaged at something eatable, in all probability the carcase of the smaller burrhel. I wanted a wolf-skin, so we proceeded to try and stalk them, but the sun was hot and the snow was soft, and I soon had to give up the attempt for the day.

Next morning we started early and reached the place shortly after sunrise. The snow was frozen hard and firm, and I made steady progress towards the carcase, hoping to surprise a wolf at it; though I had refrained from examining the spot from below in order to avoid all chance of being seen myself, so did not know if there was one there or not. Slowly we moved, for we were at nearly 19,000 feet above sea-level, and steady and sure is the principle for progression at that altitude. We reached some rocks three hundred yards from the dead burrhel, and I sat down on one to rest so as to be steady for the final effort. Suddenly there was a rush from beneath me and a series of plunges in the snow of a depression beyond. I jumped on top of the rock on which I sat to see what beast I had disturbed, and there was the big ram making off not fifty yards away. Twenty yards further on he turned to look back, and before he could get going again I tumbled him over. He crumpled up and slid down the slope, his body pushing up a small bank of snow in front of it, while I stared, hardly able to believe in my good fortune. In the distance a wolf fled like the wind across the mountain-side, and cheerfully I watched him go, then made my way cautiously to the fallen ram.

A grand pair of horns, $28\frac{3}{4}$ inches in length and $12\frac{1}{2}$ in girth, such as I might hardly ever hope to equal.

My bullet two days before had caught him low down in the chest, tearing the muscles badly. The frost getting in had evidently stiffened him and he had then laid up near his dead comrade. It was wonderful luck the wolves not finding him and my putting him up at such short range, but for all that I think I earned that pair of horns.

The other head? It measured $23\frac{1}{2}$ inches, an ordinary shootable ram.

MARKHOR

A Patriarch of the Hills

If you take the map of Northern India and follow the course of the Indus Valley, you will see that below Attock it flows through a deep gorge as far as Kalabagh, and that it then frees itself from the bondage of the hills and widens out till, fifty miles further down, it is seven miles wide in summer. At Kalabagh there is a ferry to which a small branch line of the railway runs, ending in the station of Mari-Kalabagh. There is now a railway on the right bank of the Indus from Kalabagh to Bannu, but at the time of which I write, the desolate country of barren hills and bad water was undisturbed by such an innovation. A dozen miles west of Kalabagh a range of hills runs parallel to the River Indus whose tops average 4500 feet in height, with a maximum of 5200 feet. I had heard that these held a few straight-horned markhor, and chill dawn of a late October day found me getting out of a train at Mari-Kalabagh after a journey which had been an almost continuous nightmare of changes at small junctions and progression in every direction in turn in order to reach my destination. Each change had been enlivened by the blood-curdling growls of my bull-terrier Punch, who strongly resented the approach of any native to my belongings, and was heartily seconded by Sammy the spaniel. The result was that it was impossible to get coolis to carry my kit

from one train to another unless I took the dogs twenty yards away and shouted my directions. The two signalled their delight at being let off the chain by hunting the local pi-dogs till they saw preparations being made for breakfast, when they came and squatted on their haunches near my bearer and took a keen interest in the frying of sausages.

Meanwhile my orderly, having enlisted the aid of one of the inferior members of the station staff, went off in search of transport to convey my belongings to the river bank. This arrived later on in the shape of half-a-dozen small bullocks, and a walk of about a thousand yards over sand and pebbles brought us to the water's edge at about 9 A.M.

Across the river the mud-built town of Kalabagh clustered about the base of a bare rocky hill, the deep shadows of the open doors giving it the semblance of a giant empty wasp-comb.

Much shouting and an hour's patience brought us two boats from the far side, and we landed on the right bank below the town, at a magnificent widespread banyan tree which stood on the bank a hundred yards in front of the small dak bungalow.

A couple of hours' searching produced five mules and their three attendants, and finally we set off about two o'clock for a tiring trudge across the bare stony plain, arriving at the foot of the hills at sunset. We pitched camp 500 yards from a big village, which lay close to the mouth of the valley which I had selected on the map as likely ground for markhor.

While dinner was preparing I interviewed the village elders and, having demanded a guard for the night against thieves and budmashes, made inquiry as to my chances of sport. Only Pushtu is spoken in that district and I found the broad Afridi dialect very trying, accus-

tomed as I was to the clearer enunciation of the Peshawar and Swat valleys. However, I managed to elicit the information that I was on the right line, and that some ten miles up the valley was a village where a most wonderful shikari dwelt and near which were innumerable markhor. From all this I concluded that I had a fair chance of seeing a decent buck, and that there was a man who knew something of the most likely places to find one.

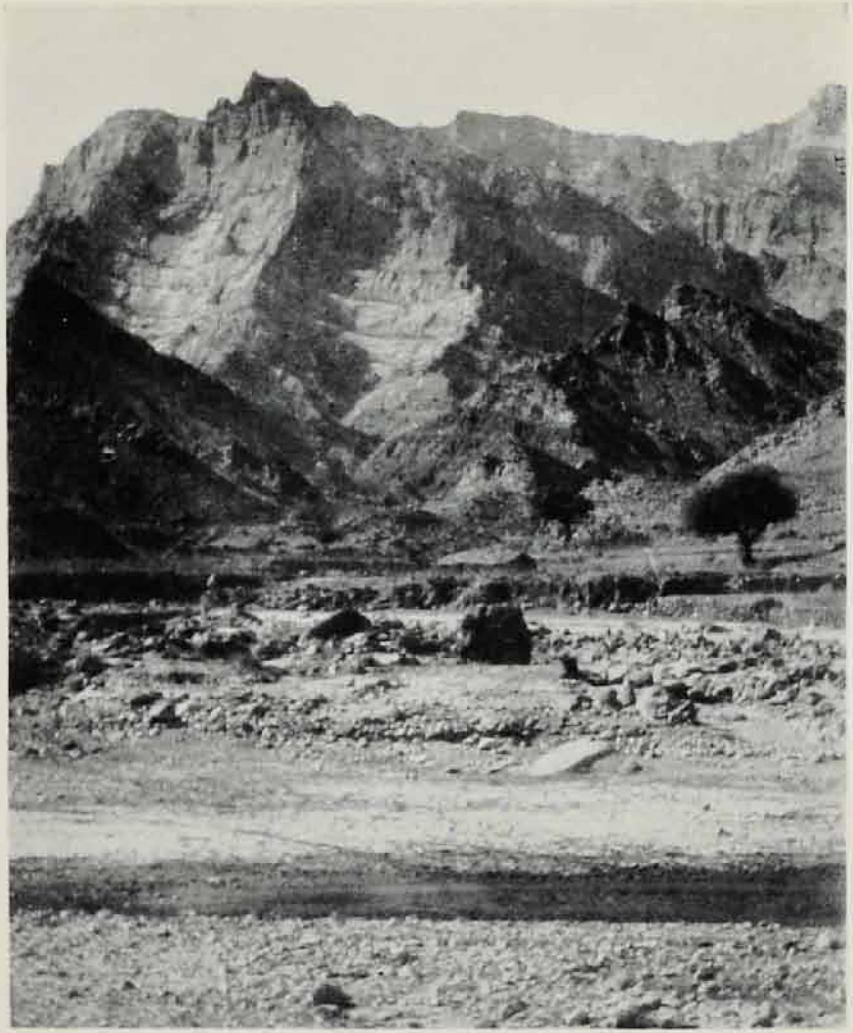
Next morning we were off a little after sunrise, and a couple of miles' travelling between the cliffs of the rapidly narrowing valley brought us to a collection of mud-walled buildings containing an alum factory, whose profits were derived from precipitating the alum in the local water supply in square tanks, and then digging it out with a spade. After passing I tried a sip of the water above the factory, and nastier tasting stuff I have never even thought of. They told me that it was the same all the way up the valley—a pleasant prospect.

A mile further the walls of the gorge closed in till we moved between 200-foot cliffs of conglomerate not thirty yards apart. Then we came to the narrowest part of the neck of the bottle, where two loaded camels could not pass, and the marks of the old Sikh gates, by which they closed the road at this border post of their domains, were still visible on the walls. Two hundred tortuous yards and we emerged—I almost said with a "pop"—into a valley a quarter of a mile wide at the bottom, the glare off the sand and white stones being quite startling after the deep gloom of the cleft which we had traversed.

Near the base of the left or southern cliff were two circular cavities about two feet apart and the same in width and depth, from which trickled some evil-smelling water leaving a thick deposit of red and green slime on

the rocks below. Our leading muleteer informed me that this was all that remained of a great dragon, which at some far-distant time had troubled the land. Its depredations eventually brought upon it the combined efforts of seventy mullahs, who gathered together, and all uttering a prayer in unison, the dragon forthwith died. Then they returned to their homes leaving the carcase, which was so immense that the stench of its decay bred a pestilence. The mullahs had to be summoned again to complete the job ; this they did by cutting up the carcase, and, having placed the fragments on their prayer-mats, they once again prayed loudly in unison ; whereupon the prayer-mats were wafted up to heaven with their smelly burdens, all that remained being the nostrils turned to rock. From these the blood and slime of the monster still issued, thereby, as Ahmed Khan the muleteer pointed out, proving the entire truth of the story.

I was now able to get an idea of the nature of my shooting ground, and the more I looked at it the more forbidding it appeared. Two ranges of hills ran parallel to each other, and between them was the valley in which we stood. These hills seemed like two great lines of breakers, for the slopes on their north sides are only moderately steep, while on the south they are quite sheer and the tops of the cliffs overhang a little in parts like the curling crest of a wave. It is on these cliffs that the markhor live, and those facing me on the north side of the valley looked almost impossible for anything without wings or suckers to its feet. Whence the wild goats derived their subsistence I could not imagine, until I discovered, on examination with my glasses, that what had appeared as a few thin lighter coloured strata were slopes (set at an angle of about seventy-five degrees) on which grew some



THE 3,000 FT. CLIFF WHERE THE PATRIARCH WAS KILLED

THE DRAGON'S NOSTRILS.

To face page 100.

withered grass and stunted bushes. These bands of indifferent vegetation were separated by anything from 200 to 1000 feet of vertical rock, mostly sandstone, and usually ended every two or three hundred yards by an abrupt fault in the formation. Almost everywhere it seemed that a stone thrown from the crest line of the hills would easily reach the valley 3000 feet below.

On the south side of the valley the slopes were much easier, and there were few sheer faces; in fact, it looked much more of a sheep than a goat country, and the local man informed me that a few oorial (*Ovis vignei*) inhabited these slopes, whereas there were only a very few markhor who lived on the precipices facing the plain.

After plodding uncomfortably over the pebbles and soft sand of the nullah we reached our destination at about eleven o'clock, and discovered that the village consisted of a few mud huts scattered among some most unfertile-looking terraced fields, on the lowest of which we pitched camp. White visitors were scarce in these parts, and the erection of my tent brought all the inhabitants around to gaze at it. They seemed very poor and ill clad, and inquiry brought to light one of the dingiest as the possessor of the name of Awal Shah, the much-vaunted shikari.

I soon entered into conversation with him, and was glad to find that he was young and apparently as keen as mustard. On my promise of ten rupees bakshish if he would show me a markhor carrying horns of a length which I measured on my stick, he tested the measurement with the span of his hand and said he knew of a buck carrying even bigger horns, and pointed out a mighty sheer-sided bluff to the north-west of the village as his home. We would have to sleep at least one night near the top of the hill, as it took too long to

climb the cliffs to give much chance of success in one day away from camp.

I decided to tackle the problem next day, and asked Awal Shah to produce a couple of men to carry up my sleeping-bag and food, whereupon he picked two of his relatives, Jalpara, a handsome well-built youth, and Saikal, a sturdy ruffian, with a bushy black beard. I showed them what I wanted carried up, namely, a sleeping-bag, small methylated stove and saucepan, a 2-lb. tin of Army Ration, a couple of soup squares, cocoa and bread. These were to be taken straight to where we were to sleep and left there while we spied the cliffs.

After lunch I scaled the hills to the south-west with Awal Shah and Saikal, to stretch my legs and look for oorial. As far as game was concerned the afternoon was a blank, but I made the better acquaintance of my two henchmen, and found Awal Shah most likeable and the possessor of considerable knowledge of the habits of our quarry, while Saikal, although not so good a hunter, was equipped with grand eyesight, and a very strong goer.

At 4 A.M. next morning we set forth, and dawn found us wrestling with the first difficult bit of climbing, an overhanging rock in a gully with unclimbable sides. Here my length of limb stood us in good stead, as I was the only one who could reach a decent handhold, and so pull myself over the edge, afterwards hauling up the others with my khud-stick. I was glad to show myself of use then, as all three Pathans turned out to be magnificent climbers, and took me into places where I was often in need of a helping hand. An hour's hard work and we parted from Saikal, who carried on the food and blankets to our bivouac, while we turned right-handed out of the gully to inspect a likely place. We no sooner got on the open hill-side than I realised

a danger I had not thought of, as a piece of rock nearly a foot thick broke away under my weight and nearly gave me a bad fall. Throughout this trip and another later one, this was a constant danger; as much of the rock was of rotten sandstone, and this fact added to the extreme steepness of the cliffs made the climbing much more difficult and trying than the worst tahr and markhor ground I have been over in my Himalayan trips.

We now got on the one of the lateral bands of grass-covered slope which I have previously mentioned as having noticed from below. This, though steep, afforded quite safe walking and Awal Shah led me to the end of it, where he dropped down and crawled to the edge; an example which I followed. I found myself overlooking a small natural amphitheatre of grass and bush-covered slope, about fifty yards square, and backed by precipices, round the corner of whose western edge we were looking. It seemed an ideal feeding ground, but was deserted. However, I realised another difficulty. The nearest part of the feed was 300 yards away and a closer approach would have been impossible, so long shots seemed probable. We lay there some twenty minutes hoping for something to show, then Awal Shah sent two large rocks bounding down without result, and we left to try another spot. This sort of thing continued all day, varied only by a rest of an hour for lunch, and several rests of lesser duration to pick the spear grass out of my clothes and skin. This abominable vegetable has barbed and pointed seeds which lodge in one's clothes, especially thick tweed such as I was wearing, and then work inwards, rendering life a misery until they are extracted.

Towards evening we had reached a point of observation near the top of the main ridge, and lay watching

a small patch of broken ground right under its overhanging crest. Suddenly Awal Shah gripped my arm and pointed. A horn had appeared against the skyline, and a fair-sized markhor buck came into view and stood surveying the cliffs below. Then followed a buck who carried trophies such as my heart desired. A grand ash-coloured beast, forty inches at the shoulder, covered with long shaggy hair and flowing beard and ruff. Not quite so large an animal as his cousin of Kashmir, but every bit as worthy of a sportsman's best efforts, from the even greater difficulty of securing his spirally twisted horns by fair stalking.

The two bucks were fully 400 yards away ; much too far for a shot. They walked fifty yards nearer and my hopes rose. They then lay down. Slowly the light faded, and then we quietly worked our way back to the gully which was to be our night's lodging.

Here there was a small pool of rain water in a hollow at the back of a wide rock shelf with a fifty-foot drop below it, and precipices closing it in like a three-sided well. The water was sweet and very pleasant after the alum-impregnated stuff I had been drinking down below. There was no danger in lighting a fire, as it could not be seen from any point but the hills some miles away, and if the wind carried the scent of it to a markhor it would carry ours too.

At first we were silent over our food, but after I had finished eating and brewed myself a mug of cocoa, I broke the silence by telling Awal Shah that he would get fifteen rupees if I bagged that buck and the others five rupees each. This provoked a chorus of : " Inshallah, he is already as dead ", and tongues were loosened. For an hour I listened to tales of this patriarch of markhor, who, it seemed, had been known for twenty years, and of others. Then the talk veered to tales

of the hunting of men and Waziri treachery, for the country we were in lay right on one of the main raiding routes, till finally I declared my intention of getting a good night's rest to prepare for hard work on the morrow.

After a very cold night we moved off as soon as it was light to the ground on the east where we had seen the big buck and his fag, but there was no sign of them. All the morning we crawled and climbed and spied without result, not daring to move freely for fear of showing ourselves. At mid-day I sent Saikal down for a fresh supply of food, and he returned at evening to the bivouac to find us a bit depressed at having failed to sight our quarry. He was undoubtedly there, said Awal Shah, probably hidden in some small cave, and after the evening meal we heartened ourselves with the discussion of a dozen different possibilities of the morrow.

The light of our third day on the hill-side was just strong enough to define large objects, and I was lifting my cocoa off the methylated stove, when there came a rattle of stones and a pebble hit me on the shoulder. I looked up and saw, black against the whitening sky, our two markhor standing statue-like on the very crest of the western cliff, not a hundred yards above us. For full five seconds we stared at each other, then I dropped the cocoa, spilling half the pot-full, and grabbed the rifle from where it leant against the rock beside me. But the old buck knew better than to wait. A bound, another spurt of stones, and they were gone.

"That's a bad business, Awal Shah," I said.

"Inshallah, we will take his head home with us," came the reply. A most encouraging fellow, Awal Shah.

It was another twenty minutes before it was light

enough to move, and at the outset we were faced by a most difficult piece of climbing in order to reach the cliffs on the west, to which our markhor had crossed over our heads. At first it seemed that we would have to go eastwards and climb up and across by the same way, which would have entailed nearly two hours' hard work. Eventually Awal Shah solved the problem.

"Sahib," he said, "you are very tall. If you stood on my hands I think you could reach that crack up there"—pointing to a fissure some thirteen feet above us. I did not like the look of it, but there was no other way, so taking off my chaplis, leaving my feet encased in the soft leather socks only, I prepared for action. Then Awal Shah leant face inwards against the rock with his arms above his head. Making a ladder of Saikal I stepped on to the palms of Awal Shah's hands while he kept his wrists pressed hard against the surface. I reached the indicated fissure, and by a long stretch to my left got a good foothold on a projecting boss, and thrust my right foot into a hole just above Awal Shah's hands, thus anchoring myself firmly. Then Jalpara came up the human ladder, stepped on to my right foot, climbed over my shoulders, and reached a good wide shelf above. After him Saikal reached my foot and was hauled up by Jalpara. Then I lowered my khud-stick with my right hand and hung on with my left. Awal Shah gripped it, swarmed up like a cat, grasped my ankles and was over my shoulders and up to the other two without putting an ounce of unnecessary strain on me. Finally I was also hauled up. An excellent bit of combined work, Awal Shah's effort at the end showing what a fine climber he was. In another twenty minutes we found ourselves on a small plateau which formed the top of the big bluff which Awal Shah had pointed out to me north-west of

SAIKAL WITH THE PATRIARCH'S HEAD.

THE CREST OF THE RANGE.

To face page 106.

the village. This bluff was like an immense flying buttress of the main range, and was connected to it by a long knife-edged ridge. Gazing down the valley on the far side of this ridge, I first heard the rattle of stones, and then made out four ewes feeding in the shadow of the cliff. As I watched I saw a wonderful performance on the part of two of them. One ewe walked out on the trunk of a tree which grew straight out at right angles to the cliff, in order to feed on a few leaves at the end of it. A second ewe thought she would also like to sample them, and walked out just as the first ewe returned. The trunk was about four inches thick and disaster seemed certain; but in some miraculous manner they passed each other in safety. How they did it I am unable to say; a jerk and a wriggle being all that I could see. Our buck was not with them, however, and some irregular patches far away on the main ridge catching my eye, I got out the telescope and counted twenty ewes and two small bucks lying down or feeding. I thought perhaps the big buck had gone to join them, and carefully searched all the intervening ground to no effect. All this time we had been trying north and west, so now we moved on to the south edge of the plateau to search the face of the buttress itself. The edge overhung a good deal, and looking down the concave face was very trying, the glare of the light-coloured rock being most dazzling, so we took it in turns to spy. Suddenly Awal Shah called me as I was taking it easy. I came to his side and he pointed downwards. On the easternmost of the two spurs which ran out from half-way down the sheer face of the bluff, stood the smaller of the two bucks. There was no mistaking him as he had a peculiar blackish patch on his near hind-quarter. Slowly he crossed the face of the cliff to the other spur, and momentarily we

expected the big buck to follow him. He reached the western spur, stood a moment on its crest looking round him, and then vanished still alone. What had happened ?

There were two obvious alternatives. Either he had gone to rejoin the big buck or he had just left him. In the first case he might have been driven away by the big buck on the latter joining some ewes early in the morning ; or, in the second case, the big one might have just found some ewes in the broken ground below the spur which the small buck had just left.

The only thing to do for the present was to " wait and see ", so another hour was spent fruitlessly scanning the ground below.

I then decided on fresh tactics. It was now 11 o'clock and the sun was very hot, so it was fairly certain that our quarry would not make a move till 4 P.M. at the earliest. I therefore sent Saikal to work down the west side of the bluff until he should reach the spur where we had last seen the small buck. He was to spy there till 3 o'clock and rejoin us near the head of the other spur which was to be our objective. We had exhausted our pool of water in the morning, and I had not been able to fill my water-bottle, so in any case we had to go down before evening.

We started on our respective journeys, and after two hours' unavailing toil, my party arrived just below the junction of the last spur with the main face of the bluff. Here, as we rested awhile, Saikal appeared above us signalling violently. There was no need to inquire the cause of his excitement ; we started up to meet him. He told us that, having reached the western spur and seen the small buck still moving steadily away, he lay down and spied round for about half an hour. Suddenly he had caught sight of two ewes lying

down on the face of our spur. After a while he had made out something in the deep shadow of a rock, and on climbing a little nearer, saw that it was the horns of the big buck sticking out from a recess in which he was lying.

Saikal then pointed to a large rock needle, under the far side of which he said all three markhor were still resting. The only way to reach this was to cross the cliff by a narrow band of earth set at a very steep angle, and with a sheer drop of between 300 and 400 feet below it. We had had no water since early morning, and I knew the traverse would be very trying, so that I would probably arrive at the firing-point with a shaky hand and make a heart-breaking miss; I therefore asked if there was any chance of finding some water near by.

Jalpara said he knew of a hole in the rock situated in a ravine some 200 feet below us, which might hold a little. I sent him off to try, and in twenty minutes he was back with my water-bottle full and we all had a good drink. Feeling a new man I started along the connecting slope, reached the ridge leading to the rock needle, crawled along it and clambered slowly up to the sloping top of the rock. Inch by inch I pushed my head over.

I had got my whole head and shoulders over before I caught sight of a ewe lying on a ledge almost directly under me. I craned a little further forward and saw a second ewe lying nearer in. Then my heart stood still for a second, for beside her a mighty horn projected from underneath the rock. But it was an extremely awkward position all the same, although I was within eighty yards of them.

It is no good shooting at a horn, and at any moment some stray puff of wind might carry the news of our

presence to its owner or one of his attendant ewes. Still, there was no other possible firing-point, so I got my rifle ready, made Jalpara hold my legs to prevent me slipping over, and waited.

Five minutes of this discomfort was all I had to endure. Some eddy of wind carried the taint of danger to the ewes, for they suddenly sprang to their feet and bolted down-hill in a whirl of stones and dust. Their lord and master was not slow to follow, but a hundred yards below me he stopped to glance back. I fired. His heels went in the air and he pitched over the edge. Jalpara let go my legs so that I nearly dived over head first, and an avalanche of three yelling Pathans shot down-hill in a cloud of dust, utterly heedless of my agonised cries not to spoil the head skin by cutting the "halal" too deep, while I scrambled and clambered clumsily in the rear. Of course when I got there his throat was cut from ear to ear, but a skilful taxidermist could repair that, and what did it matter when I had got his horns after such a three days' hunt?

A MIXED BAG

THE hastily planned outing and the wayside venture have a peculiar charm of their own ; for success preserves them as pleasant memories, while failure leaves no lasting regrets.

Of such days every sportsman can call to mind a few, not necessarily notable for the size of the bag, but more usually for some unexpected piece of fortune whether with fur, feather or fin.

The sudden arrival of some breathless runner to tell of a kill near by, or a big stag feeding close to the line of march ; the casual beat of a cover which proves to hold a bird for every few yards you walk ; the tentative cast into a pool of little promise which is rewarded by bent rod and screaming reel, give an exhilaration quite different to the glow of triumph which rewards the successful outcome of much planning and careful thought.

The northern part of Central India is particularly suited to such speculative expeditions, for it holds numerous large " tanks " (as the big artificial reservoirs are called in India) and scattered stretches of jungle break the continuity of the fields, while low rocky hills crop up from the plain and harbour panther and pig in the thickets which cover them. Blackbuck, nylghae and chinkara harry the crops ; quail, partridges and hares dwell in the rough grass and bush-choked gullies ;

while the tanks are the home throughout the winter of numerous species of duck and snipe.

A sudden decision to take a week-end in the country after a strenuous period of company training resulted in my arrival one February evening at a small dak bungalow after a twenty-mile ride. A rather dilapidated white-washed building standing amongst scattered babul thorn in a compound overgrown with wiry yellow grass, it did not look very attractive, but within a radius of five miles were several excellent tanks; chinkara, blackbuck and nylghae were to be found within half that distance; and only 500 yards away was a river-bed holding occasional mugger-haunted pools, bordered with large trees, over which peafowl could be driven from their raids on the village fields, and crossing high up like immense pheasants were so deceptive in the pace of their flight that I found that far more got a charge of No. 4 through their tails and regained the safety of the jungle on the far bank, than remained behind eventually to grace my table. Then between the bungalow and the mud-village rose a hill crowned with an ancient ruined fort and surrounded by large trees, mostly banyans, the haunt of numerous beautiful green pigeon; and a stone thrown into the huge old castle well would stir up blue rock doves which offered most difficult shots as they rose like rockets out of the depths below. Indeed a most delightful bit of country to any sportsman to whom variety was as desirable as the size of the bag.

Before sunrise I left the bungalow and rode off into the jungle with three coolis in attendance, having sent on my lunch to a tank which I proposed visiting later in the day. Early on it was evident that my lucky star was in the ascendant, for we had not gone half a mile when a chinkara buck trotted out of the bushes less

than 200 yards on the right of the track and stood to gaze. I jumped off my pony and he turned to go just too late, for my bullet caught him behind the last rib, and raking forward, crumpled him up in a heap. Having sent him straight back to the bungalow (these little gazelle only weigh 25 lbs. clean) we went on and sighted some blackbuck within a mile. They had not seen us, so taking advantage of the cover given by a patch of high millet, I got within 150 yards of them without much difficulty. There were two good bucks among them, one of whom was standing broadside on. He collapsed to the shot, while the other, who had been lying down a few yards from him, jumped up only to fall kicking with a bullet through both shoulders. Some villagers were working in the fields near by, and the offer of a few annas and some meat soon induced them to bring along a bullock cart from the shade of a mango grove and take the buck to the bungalow.

No further adventure befell me till we reached the village bordering the first tank which I intended to shoot. As I rode past its outskirts I saw three blue pigeons feeding on a threshing floor, and dropped two of them as they rose.

The tank was typical of those scattered plentifully about the district. A thousand yards in length by three hundred in width, on the east and north it was contained by a high bund on which grew fine mango and banyan trees sheltering the clustered mud huts of the village above a flight of long stone steps on which a few women washed clothes and chattered, while an aged elder basked lizard-like and torpid in the sun. Amongst the dark green foliage gleamed the high-pitched roof of a temple, the whole picture being mirrored in the clear, cool water—only broken into ripples where the women soaked and wrung out garments.

Along the margin opposite the village grew a long stretch of high reeds, while at the south end the tank petered out into a five-acre patch of marsh and bog : a certain holding ground for snipe. Over by the reeds I could see several batches of duck, mostly gadwall, red-headed pochard and widgeon, while teal and cotton teal fed close to their shelter.

Shooting on these Central Indian tanks is usually done from a dug-out—a craft constructed by hollowing out a log, and which combines the maximum of insecurity with the minimum of expense. Having obtained one of these precarious conveyances and placed a wide-mouthed earthenware " chatti " in it to sit on, my boatman (clad in two dingy wisps of rag, the one round his head, the other about his loins) pushed off, and we fared forth to attack the duck.

Our course lay towards a big batch of pochard, whose heads went up when we were about fifty yards distant, and as they showed signs of rising I made the boatman suddenly increase the pace by a couple of vigorous shoves of his pole, so that we were within less than forty yards when they left the water, and I got one with each barrel. There was a roar of wings as duck rose on every side and whirred in all directions. Mostly they flew round the tank, and by thrusting the boat into the edge of the reeds I got some fine shooting. Ten or a dozen duck were soon down and then things quieted, for the birds were circling high out of shot or had left the tank by this time. After picking up the slain and expending several cartridges on a couple of winged birds—white-eyed pochards, which dived to the flash in maddening fashion—we then coasted along the edge of the reeds, occasionally putting up a mallard or widgeon, which buzzed up like gigantic bumble-bees, and which I found quite easy to miss through under

A VILLAGE TANK.

PART OF THE BAG.

To face page 114.

shooting. However, four or five more were added to the heap in the boat; then turning a corner into a long, deep bay, I found it full of cotton teal, which flew past the entrance in a long string, out of which a few remained floating feet up in the water. The duck seemed to be done with, and we were half-way across the tank on the return journey, when there came a great piece of luck. About thirty gadwall suddenly swept down out of the sky and passed my craft at about twenty yards' range in line abreast, just clear of the water. Raking the row of heads, seven fell to my first barrel and two to the second; so that I collected nine of these fine ducks for the expenditure of two cartridges.

Arrived at the bank I sorted the bag. Two mallard, eleven gadwall, two red-headed pochard, three common teal, six cotton teal, four widgeon, two white-eyed pochard and a shoveller: thirty-one head in all made a fine show.

The next thing was to try the marsh at the south end of the tank for snipe. I began badly, missing three birds running and then falling into a water-cut up to my waist. Having partially dried myself and taken a fresh lot of cartridges while the sais spread the damp ones to dry on a blanket in the sun, I got under way again, and soon had six couple of full, two jack and a painted snipe out of the patch of bog. The capabilities of the tank now seemed to be exhausted, but there was still as good to come. There came a chuckling call, like a stone ringing on clear ice, and half-a-dozen sandgrouse flew overhead, dipped suddenly, and pitching on a small peninsula of land ran to the water's edge to drink. Just as I got within range another bigger batch arrived, and soon the gun became almost too hot to hold as flight after flight circled round the watering place. For nearly half an hour the fun continued, and then the

flight ceased as suddenly as it had begun, and I rose from my sitting position, glad to stretch myself, while the coolis picked up twenty-one dead birds.

Counting the two blue pigeon I now had sixty-nine head of small game and three of big, and the day was hardly more than begun.

A drink and twenty minutes' rest, then we moved on towards a tank about three miles to the north-east. A quarter of a mile from the village we came to a patch of broken ground where a couple of dry ravines meandered across the plain, their banks overgrown with grass and hung with creeper-covered thorn trees. Out of these I got two grey partridges, three tiny button quail and a hare, and missed another hare. Button quail are hardly worth shooting as a rule, but I wanted to include as many varieties as possible in my bag, so when a covey of these Lilliputian game birds exploded all round me I let off both barrels at them, knocking over two with the right and missing with the left. Then, as I went forward to pick up, a belated straggler rose at my feet, was missed first shot and dropped to the second. We now got into a broad belt of cultivation ; fields of lofty millet alternating with stretches of low-growing crop. In one of these last a herd of over forty antelope were feeding, but there was not a buck among them worth troubling about. Then we again entered a tract of black cotton soil, whose fissures gape for the feet of the unwary, and nearing a small rocky hill I spied half-a-dozen nylghae accompanied by an immense blue bull.

Now nylghae marrow bones are excellent and his skin makes magnificent shooting boots, so I had long wanted an opportunity to acquire both. Accordingly I walked away at right angles until I had put a clump of trees between us as I advanced. This clump consisted

of half-a-dozen wild mangoes with a thick undergrowth of thorn and creeper. Having reached it I pushed along a game track which seemed to lead right through it. Suddenly there was an upheaval almost under my feet and the bush became alive with scurrying chital, a small herd of which had been resting for the day in the shade after raiding the crops at night. They were three or four miles from their usual haunts, and I was so astonished that I almost let the stag go, but firing just as he was disappearing after passing within three yards of me, knocked him clean off his legs into a bush. A more unexpected piece of fortune than to secure a good head of this beautiful deer it was hard to imagine; especially on top of a really fine morning's sport.

The stag's horns measured 32½ inches and were my first trophy of the species.

While he was being skinned and cleaned I strolled out to see what had become of the nylghae, and was surprised to find that they had only run a short way and that the old bull was standing staring in our direction from the shade of a babul tree some 500 yards distant. There was a small gully running to within a hundred yards of his position, and a short run crouching behind the cover of a patch of bushes brought me to it. I hurried along it and came up at a point within easy range to find him still staring in the direction of the clump of trees I had left, so that my fifth head of large game for the morning was soon having the tape put over it. He was an immense old bull with horns 9¼ inches in length. Not much of a trophy, but a good specimen of his kind, of which I have never since troubled to shoot another.

As the coolis came up to join me I found it still wanted three minutes to 12 o'clock. Five head of big game and seventy-five head of small is a record I have

never since equalled in a morning's shooting, and I never expect to better for pure enjoyment.

A wander round the hill behind the bungalow and then a peafowl drive over the river-bed produced five of these last-named birds (their crops packed with young corn), and a few green pigeon and a couple of painted spurfowl completed a bag whose variety could hardly be excelled in any other district in the world.

THE TYRANT

"SAHIB, there is great tyranny here."

"Well, who is the tyrant?"

The big Kashmiri herdsman in whose hut I am sheltering from the rain on my way up to camp in a high ravine of the Kaj-i-Nag Mountains, sinks his voice, and glancing nervously up the mountain, says:

"A black bear, Sahib. A monster bigger than a buffalo. For four years he has been living on us. Three hundred of our sheep has he killed and twenty cows, while last year a man from our village was killed by him, and look what he did to my brother, who met him by chance in the forest the year before."

He turns to call into the recesses of the hut, and a lop-sided figure stumbles into the light. Half the scalp gone, and the side of his face, with the eye, a shattered ruin; he then strips off his upper garment and shows shoulders furrowed and torn, while a knee, stiffened and twisted by a bite, gives additional evidence of the ghastly injuries a bear can inflict when happened on at close quarters.

The man who had been killed had fired a blunderbuss full of slugs at the bear at close quarters, and then been borne down and mauled to death by the infuriated beast.

"I suppose he was poaching musk-deer?" I ask, and a sheepish grin answers me in the affirmative.

"Well, if you Gujars did not poach all the musk-deer and markhor in the Kaj-i-Nag, perhaps sahibs would be more willing to spend a little time killing black bear. No one is going to travel here just for the sake of a few bear."

"Two sahibs have come, and each fired at and wounded him, but he got away. Will you not slay him for us, for you are a famous shikari, and can do better than they?" A truly oriental touch of flattery.

However, I refused to stop and went on another three miles to have a try for one of the few markhor worth shooting remaining in the range. A bad track, passable only to slowly moving, lightly laden coolis, so I reached the camping ground a couple of hours before my baggage, and, sitting down to wait, began to meditate on the bear and how he had taken to such evil ways; finally weaving my fancies into his life story in this fashion.

Ten years before he had been born, together with a sister, in a hollow under a great slab of rock, veiled by hanging brambles and surrounded by winter snow. At first, when the snow began to melt in March, his mother had made short foraging trips, eating roots and winter berries. Then, as the cubs grew stronger and the snow receded, she took them out to feed in the evening and in the dark of the early dawn, guiding them to the best patches of sweet spring grass, and driving them home to some lair in the thick hazel, or under the roots of a great pine during the sunshine hours of the day. Month by month they worked a little higher, until they lived near the topmost level of the pines and but a little below the rhododendrons and the birches, and were taught to climb for rowan berries and other such jungle fruit.

In October an early fall of snow drove the three

down to the level of the hazels and walnuts, where they fed greedily in the great trees which cover the eastern side of one branch of the Kathai Nullah, a mile above the 300-ft. fall which roars into its rock-pit just below Chham village. Sometimes they would feed a little late in the mornings among the hazels, and too close to the huts, so that their mother would hurry them home to their cave below the markhor cliffs ; encouraging them to hasten by admonitory grunts, and occasionally correcting with a peevish blow a too frequent tendency to delay the retreat by wanderings in search of tit-bits.

Once again the snows of winter fell, and the snow being light this season, they were able to forage successfully now and then for nuts and berries, and so were in good condition when spring came round again. For black bears do not hibernate completely like their brown brethren ; but spend the winter lower down, where the snow is not so heavy. In late March they sallied forth again, and now the cubs were bigger, so that more food must be found and a wider range covered in the search.

So far they had escaped notice, living mostly in the thick forest or in the deep steep secluded nullahs where the cattle did not penetrate. The more open slopes where the sun struck freely and the grass grew faster were now their haunts, and in mid-April they were feeding close to the summer grazing huts of a Gujar village when the first sahib of the year came to pitch his camp in search of the markhor on the cliffs above.

He was young and excitable, so when, having pushed on ahead of his coolis, he came suddenly on the family of three feeding on the grass just by his camping place, he snatched the rifle from his shikari, and, taking

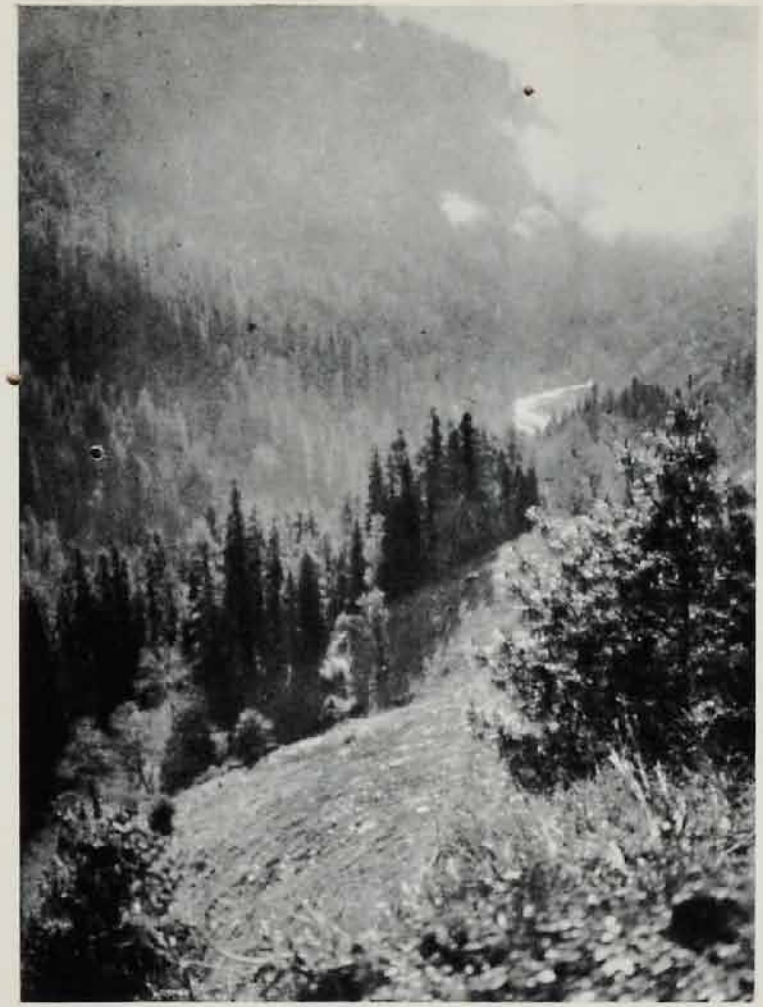
hurried aim, missed the mother with the first shot, then emptied his magazine at her as they all bolted into the nullah below. He missed her completely, but the last shot, a couple of yards wide, struck the smaller cub in the neck and she rolled over dead. Our future "tyrant" had been grazed on the flank by a bullet, and giving a short "woof" in answer to the sting, fled with his mother down into the deep gorge below, then up a two-mile climb to the crest of the ridge beyond, and so down into a deep hollow full of scrub and fallen trees, where they sheltered. Here he lay, grumbling and licking his wound, sullen and angry at the result of his first close meeting with man, whom he had formerly seen but dimly in the distance.

For weeks he and his mother stayed high up among the trees until his wound had healed, feeding mainly among the pines; but the spring rains failed and the winter snows had been light, so the grass was poor, and one day in June his mother took him down to a lower valley, and showed him how to rob the mulberry trees at the edge of the cultivation at night, and to disregard the frantic shouts of the villagers, unless they came too near; so that his sullen dislike of man was tempered with both caution and contempt.

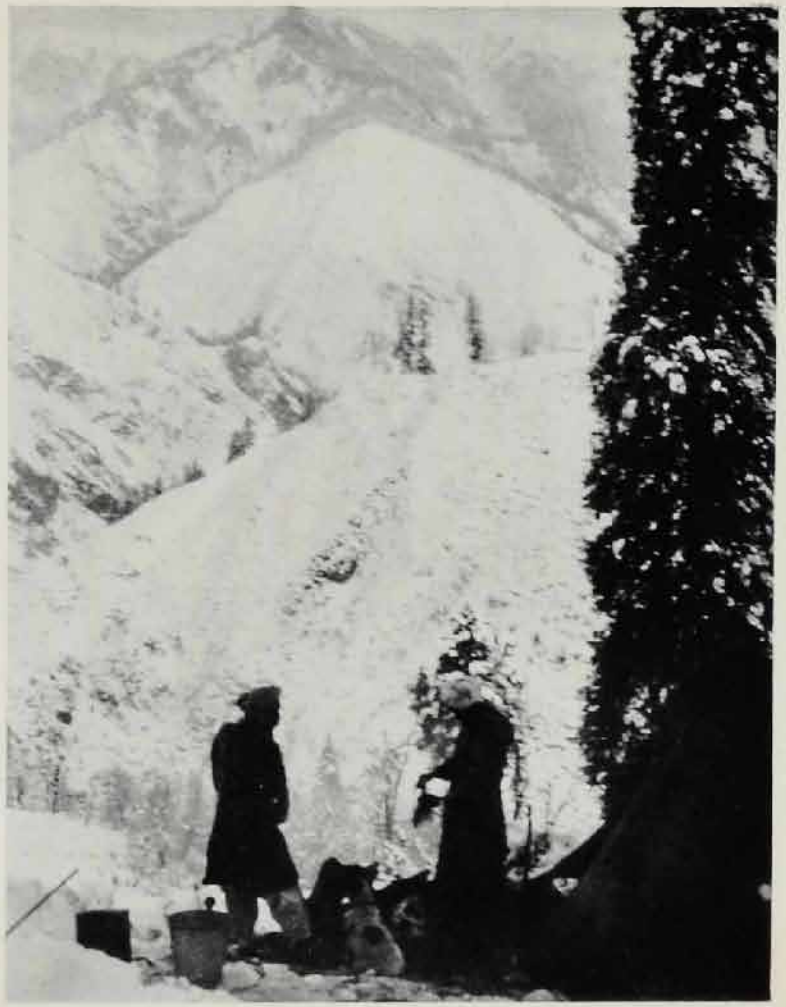
He was now as big as a collie dog, and growing fast, so that his mother found him wilful and hard to control.

In the autumn they robbed the maize fields of the village, and then mounted to the ridge-tops at 7000 feet once more, where they feasted on trees loaded with wild pears and on rowan berries, until the snow came and drove them once again to their cave below the cliffs.

Next spring he was over two years old and foraged much by himself, sometimes leaving his mother for two or three days, then meeting her again and staying with



SPRING



WINTER

THE TYRANT'S HOME.

To face page 122.

her on one of their old feeding grounds. Then came disaster.

Another sahib came to hunt markhor, but as he arrived in the nullah in the third week of April, down came heavy snow, so that after a week of discomfort, finding that the approaches to the higher ground were all blocked, he shifted to the bottom of the valley, and demanded some kind of sport from his shikari. For four days he hunted goural on the cliffs above his camp, killing three of these little chamois-like animals ; then a villager told him that he had seen two bears that morning in the forest above the fields, where they had been driven by the snow.

Now this sahib was an experienced hunter, and guessing that they would lie up in the thick undergrowth of a small ravine, arranged a beat. Our two were lying contentedly on a shelf beneath an overhanging rock, when a din of human shouting broke out below them, while tappings and coughings on the ridges to either side of the ravine showed that these were also occupied by the enemy.

Snuffling and looking about them uncertainly, they began to climb the bed of the stream, stopping and sniffing uneasily every now and then. But the wind blew uphill and their natural line of retreat was to the ridge above them, so on they went with the clamour behind them growing closer. Round a bend in the gully, over a big rock and on to a little stretch of shingle, and then from behind a tree came the " crack " and " thud " which the cub remembered when his sister had been killed the previous year, and he himself had been wounded. Over backwards went his mother with a " wough ", then wailed out a dying chant, as the cub fled down the gully.

As Kashmiri beaters so often do, three of them had

slipped down into the nullah and were trailing up it, the easiest route, uttering an occasional feeble shout. Round a fallen log came the cub, blind with fear and rage, and the cowardly coolis yelled and fled up the sides. One fell so that the cub ran into him, and, biting the man's leg and clawing at him as he climbed over him, fled on ; leaving the yelling cooli with rage partly assuaged and fear no longer rampant. He turned through the forest above the village and climbed steadily up towards the head of the nullah, until he reached a ravine cut deep between gloomy crags, and, after scaling a slight track to crest a hundred-foot waterfall, splashed through the stream at the top and lay up in a great hollow deodar tree amongst the snow.

He was already a potential danger, for he had learnt the difference between man the hidden danger with a rifle, and the local villager ; while fear and pain had both served to make him morose and savage. Man was no longer invincible when taken by surprise at close quarters, but dangerous at a distance in the open.

For weeks he lived in the seclusion of his great ravine, until two poaching Gujars hunting musk-deer spent the night near his cave and the light of their fire drove him to a still higher valley. Here no one came, and he lived in peace until the autumn frosts killed the grass, and he could find no more bees' nests to rob, so down he travelled again and pillaged the maize fields and the walnut groves.

So he lived until the autumn of his sixth year, never staying long in one vicinity, only looting the fields when necessity drove him, and keeping to the most secluded ravines and densest forests where white hunters were least likely to come.

And then came the incident which led him into evil ways and was to prove his death.

Late one autumn evening he left his hollow under a tumbled pile of moraine rocks and moved slowly down a gully high up in the western ridge of the main valley. The sheep and cattle had been driven down to the summer huts a mile below, and he wandered along, sometimes turning over a big stone in search of grubs, or feeding greedily on a patch of wild strawberries, when, on moving towards a thicket of yellow raspberries, he saw something white moving slightly in the trailing brambles at the bottom. A puff of air brought him the odour of sheep, and, detecting no signs of man, he moved forward warily to investigate.

A lamb, struck by a stone dislodged by one of the flock higher up the hill and hurled into the undergrowth half dead and with a broken shoulder, had been left unnoticed by the shepherd when the rest were driven home. He came close and touched it with a paw, and it tried to stagger away. Rage seized him and he struck it down, then bit furiously at the little beast, and maddened by hunger and the taste of blood, tore at it and ate great gobbets of meat, feeding in filthy fashion, and strewing torn remnants all about the place. Finally all was done, and he licked up a few of the larger fragments ; then, driven by further lust of meat, made his way down the hill until the warm scent of the sheep-folds was borne to him on the cool night breeze.

But he was not as yet a hardened killer, and had still some fear of man, so, after circling round the huts for some hours, went back up the hill before dawn, where he sought half-heartedly for vegetable food with the lust for flesh still on him.

All day in his lair the taint of sheep was borne up to him by the breeze ; even the warm odour of rose and hemlock, pine resin and meadowsweet, could not kill it ;

so that, hungry and lustful, he crept out a little before sunset and made his way carefully by a detour through the forest, then down a gully to where a patch of dense alder overhung the bigger ravine.

A little later and the flock of sheep and goats began to pass a few yards below him in a close string, but with the usual dozen stragglers following in the rear, stopping for an occasional nibble, then trotting on to catch up the remainder of the flock. Two Gujar boys were in charge, but one was nearly at the head and the other near the middle, trusting to the stragglers to follow him ; careless and thinking of the meal at the huts below, like boys all the world over.

Then the rush of a great black beast between the main herd and the stragglers. Some turned to flee up the gully from the bear, while those above hurried down to join the flock, so forming a little mob amongst which he dashed, striking out right and left with his forepaws and maiming three ; then seizing a struggling bleating victim in his teeth and worrying at it as the flock fled down the gully in a woolly bleating torrent with their guardians ahead yelling " Harput ! harput ! "—" The bear ! the bear ! " Tearing a few mouthfuls from his immediate victim, the bear then mauled his others into death or helplessness, and glutted his appetite, caring nothing for the yells of angry men or women's wails, which floated up to him from the huts below.

In the morning, satiated with meat, he made his way up to his boulder-cave and lay basking on a flat rock throughout the day. Then, warned by instinct that it might be dangerous to stay, he travelled that night to a great flattened ridge where he knew there were sheep-folds in plenty. For two days he did not find an opportunity ; until driven by hunger one dark and rainy night, he prowled close up to the sheep-fold

seeking for a weak spot in the brush-topped, loose stone wall, and found in it a gap but recently badly mended by some lazy Gujar.

Putting his weight against the wall it promptly crumbled inwards, so that he burst among the terrified sheep, smiting and killing some, while the others poured out of the gap behind him through the darkness and down to the forest-covered slopes below. Then the Gujar shepherds arrived shouting with flaming "dinis", as they call the bundles of resinous pine splinters which they use to light them on dark nights.

Sulkily the bear withdrew; then going down-hill to the forest heard the bleating of the scattered sheep, and set about killing them in the dark, driving them further still into the gloomy depths, and slaying a dozen at his leisure before he ceased. He ate the last two, then lay up for the next day in a dense patch of pink-flowered *skimmia*. He returned at night to the carcases, most of which had been found by the owners and the skins removed, so lived in plenty for a week.

Twice more did he play this trick before the on-coming winter drove the shepherds and their flocks to the villages in the valley below, and there he could not break into the well-built log pens, and moreover was afraid of guns. But he had fattened up for winter, so that his usual fare and the carcase of a markhor ewe killed by an avalanche brought him through to spring, stronger and heavier than the usual run of his kind.

Now indeed he became a tyrant. In May the flocks moved up, and shifting into the valley where he had first killed a sheep, he preyed regularly on them, growing bolder and more dangerous every day. As it chanced, this part of the nullah was closed to all shooting, and it was not until September, when a forest officer, travelling by a little known track which led

over the crest of the range from the Karnah Valley and the Shamshibri Mountains beyond, camped one afternoon by the Gujar huts and gave ear to their plaints, that the tyrant was sought for. He was crossing a small couloir in the forest on his way to a pet patch of raspberries, when "crack!" from 200 yards below, came the first bullet over his back. He climbed frantically to reach the cover just above. Then a blow on his thigh, and a fierce burning ran up to his shoulder. "Wough! wough!" and he galloped into the forest pursued by two more futile shots. The bullet had travelled up under his skin right along the ribs, and for days he lay up in thick undergrowth, at first without food, then gradually, as the wound healed, foraging farther and farther afield.

A week later he moved to other quarters above a lower village, and on the way, as he pushed through the undergrowth at the head of a grassy gully, he suddenly smelt cow close by. There, in a little hollow in the bushes, was a cow with her calf. She had always been given to straying, and had been away from the other cattle, avoiding searchers by keeping to the jungle, and finding the grazing better as she went higher, was happy in fancied security. Up rose the tyrant, and brought his whole weight down on her back, biting and tearing at her neck and withers, bearing her down. Crash into the bushes, and there, as she lay tangled in the roots, he crippled her by breaking two legs and her back, then while she was still alive, began to eat her. A ghastly tragedy, for a bear is a cruel killer.

The calf fled, and was more mercifully killed and eaten by a leopard the following night.

A great store of meat this, so that already savage with pain and hunger, his ferocity grew as he devoured it.

Now he became a killer of cows as well as sheep, and grew bigger and bigger, and still more of a scourge to the upper valley. Then one day he killed a cow too early, where it had wandered away in search of sweeter grass, and the owner missed it and, thinking it had merely strayed, came to search for it. Bad fortune brought him within a couple of yards of the brute, which seized him by the knee and, having dragged him to the earth, tore and struck at his head and shoulders until he lost his senses and the beast left him; to be found and carried home later by his brother.

A young sahib was camped on the far side of the nullah at the time, and hearing of the attack, came over to bivouac for the night to try and kill the tyrant. He was inexperienced, and armed only with a wretched little low-velocity rifle, so, when he saw the great bear coming towards him from the kill, he aimed at his shoulder, and the little bullet flattened on the bone and travelled on another foot beneath the skin, the bear galloping off slightly damaged but much worse tempered.

Next April, a late fall of snow brought a Gujar, poaching musk-deer, into the tyrant's winter domain, and they met suddenly a few paces apart, at a turn in the bottom of the ravine. Panic-stricken, the man fired his charge of slugs full in the face of the bear. The slugs but stopped in the bone, and the infuriated brute charged, and once again tore and bit; but this time until no sign of life remained in the mangled body.

The rest of the year he spent in the valley, terrorising the Gujars and killing sheep almost when he pleased, so that he weighed 400 lbs. and had forequarters like a bull.

Winter once more, and he even raided the sheep just outside the houses. Spring, and he moved back

to his first favourite haunt as the cattle moved up in May.

And now, I had arrived.

The nullah was narrow, moist and muggy, overgrown with five-foot hemlock at the bottom, which we had to clear to lay bare a stretch of sodden earth just sufficiently wide to hold the tents. Above the camp were steep slopes and crags thickly grown with forest, pine and deodar, chestnut, plane and walnut predominating, while a bush undergrowth filled every open space. Just above the camp was a cliff on whose very edge some ragged pines grew precariously, the earth mostly fallen from their roots, so that they threatened danger; but the valley was so steep and narrow that no other place could be found on which to pitch camp.

Two days, starting at dawn, I climbed laboriously 1500 feet to the eastern ridge, and watched the cliffs on the farther side of the next big nullah for markhor, seeing only a few ewes and two small unshootable bucks. Each day I was driven down by rain a little after midday, and arrived with sodden clothes to a sodden camp, where everything reeked of mould and decaying hemlock.

The third day I was saved my climb by the rain beginning three hours before dawn and continuing until 9 o'clock. Then the sun broke out, and there arrived with it the lumbardar (headman) of the Gujar village, his brother and one or two others, and stood salaaming humbly before me.

A Gujar is seldom polite unless he wants something, so I said: "Well, Habib, what is it you want?"

"Sahib, we are still more oppressed by the tyrant. Two nights running he has prowled around our huts, and kept us from sleep. He moves on the hill-side above

the huts all day. Our cows and buffaloes have calved, and we dare not drive them up to the good grass, so that the rank stuff they eat turns their milk to water and all the calves will die of colic. Come and kill him, Sahib, he is so bold and it will be easy."

They were really in distress, so, despite the fact that I dislike the Gujar of Kashmir very thoroughly as a rule, for a lying, thieving, truculent scalliwag, and also because I could find no shootable markhor and the rain threatened to bring the tottering pine trees down on my camp from the cliff above, I said: "All right. Get coolis quick and I will move to your huts as soon as they arrive."

A chorus of pleased ejaculations, and the lumbardar declared that he and his friends would carry some loads then and there, and come back with more men for the rest; thus thinking to clinch the matter of my coming if they shifted some of my kit, for I would not then change my mind.

They were away in under an hour with some of my loads, my Kashmiri shikari with them to pitch camp at the other end. I waited and had lunch, the cooli for the rest of the luggage arriving shortly after, and about 4 o'clock we set off to climb the tail of the western ridge back to the Gujars' valley. We had to cross a mile of wide open hill-side before reaching the rocky hump above the huts, and I had pushed on with the lumbardar and his brother, when suddenly the latter exclaimed and pointed.

The opposite side of the valley was much higher than ours, some 3000 feet above the stream; the rocky upper portion was great cliffs, below which steep rock ridges slanted pine-covered to the valley below, only separated by water-worn gullies, and nearer the mouth, by two long narrow strips of herbage and scrub, immediately

above the huts. Crossing the right-hand one of these was a black animal, just a small moving blot from where we were a mile away. A quick look with the glasses was enough. It was the bear. Some of the more lightly laden coolis had come up, and setting down their loads, they came forward.

"Kill him, Sahib, kill the monster!"—and they crowded round me with pleading, hope and hate in their voices. Never, in many years' big-game hunting, have I known such evident loathing for a marauding beast.

"Sit down and keep quiet, and I will make a plan," I ordered.

A few minutes' watching convinced me that the bear would not go further than the left-hand strip of herbage, for the cliffs beyond were too steep for him, and he would probably stop in the 200-yards-wide tract of rock and jungle in between.

He disappeared into the broken jungle tract, and I said to the lumbardar, "Habib, you and one cooli go up by the far edge of the long maidan on the left, and when you have reached that big dead pine, if the bear has emerged, shout, and he will turn back to where I sit on the way he came beyond the right-hand maidan. If he has not come out, then separate, and walk towards me a hundred yards apart, talking to each other and tapping the trees with your sticks. He will turn back for two men acting boldly, though he might not for one."

We started down together, and, taking the lumbardar's brother and a couple of coolis with me, I started to climb a thousand feet up the right-hand maidan, to where I had marked a small land-slide and a broken pine sapling close to where the bear had first been seen. A steady plug up in the moist atmosphere

THE TYRANT.

To face page 132.

soaked me with sweat, and I clambered on to a projecting lump of earth and rock. Taking off my coat, and settling into a comfortable position which enabled me to cover an arc of about 90 degrees to my front and above me, I tested my magazine and placed a few spare cartridges beside me.

I had not long to wait. Three hundred yards to my front a stick tapped on a tree-trunk, there was a sound of breaking twigs, and I glimpsed a small moving patch of black 100 yards nearer.

A cooli got excited, pointed, and called out, "There he is!"

I cursed him to silence, but the damage was done. The bear had turned up through the rock and jungle and would not appear anywhere within easy range. Still, the cliffs at the top were impossible for him, and he must pass along the foot about 250 yards away, and I knew my rifle well enough to hope for good results, even at that range, if I could get a clear shot. I rapidly changed my position, settled my back against a conveniently slanting stone, and crossing one leg over the other, rested my rifle on my thigh, pointing upwards almost at 45 degrees.

The black patch appeared at the left end of the cliff foot and moved to the right. There was one possible place for a shot where there was an open patch perhaps twenty feet across. I sighted on this and waited. He appeared, walking steadily on. I fired. "Wough! wough! wough!" and he was rolling down-hill, a bullet behind his shoulder. He stuck in a bush a hundred yards nearer. "Bang!" and he was rolling down again struggling and swearing. Down through the bushes and rocks, sometimes checking his progress but not offering another chance until he rolled out in front of me a few yards away, and seeing me, struggled up

with rage in his pig's eyes, to collapse to a final shot in the chest.

The tyrant was dead.

Shouts from the opposite hill-side, whence the coolis had witnessed the whole show, and those with me crowded round the dead beast with ejaculations of pleasure and curses on him equally mingled.

A very heavy bear, weighing over 400 lbs., he had immense shoulders and forearms, and taped just on six feet, nose to rump between pegs, while later his skin pegged out at well over 7½ feet.

We rolled him down the hill to a flat patch by the Gujar huts, and, after taking his photograph, began to skin him. It was dark before we had got half-way through the job, and carrying on by the light of a hurricane lamp fetched from camp, we had turned him over and were skinning his back, when the knife grated on something hard. I paused and felt; then using the point of the knife, out came a ·256 Mannlicher bullet. A little later the shikari exclaimed; his knife had slipped on something solid and cut his finger. Out came a solid lead ·300 bore "Sherwood" bullet. Separating the head from the body as soon as we had skinned up to the ears, we took the whole hide to camp.

Next day I skinned out the head, before cleaning and pegging out the skin. Between hide and bone I found three soft slugs, evidently cut from the same stick of lead and fired from a native blunderbuss at close quarters when the bear was facing the firer.

Was that life history I had imagined a true one after all?

SIND IBEX

The First Trip

"Pad, shuffle; pad, shuffle", the camels trot along easily through the dark over a level bit of the track, and I relapse into drowsiness soothed by the easy swing. Then a series of back-breaking lurches as the steep, water-worn bank of a river-bed brings him down to a walk and we splash across a shallow pool, disturbing a couple of teal which whir away towards the stars. Trot again, up the other bank, and soon we pass the baggage camels, which had started two hours before us, while the dawn begins to break behind us over the barren country of Western Sind.

Monotonous gravelly plain, with patches of scrub, is all we can see at first. Then a black patch of tamarisk appears to our right front, and beyond it a stretch of white sand dunes glimmer in the growing light. A few barren millet fields are passed on the left of the track and the morning light grows hard and clear, sharply defining a low range of whitish stony hills about ten miles to our front. These take colour, the tamarisk turns dark green instead of black, while the sand dunes grow rosy and the sky behind us glows gold below deep-blue, with long lines of pearl and silver cloud-slips laid across the glow.

Then the sun rushes up, the hard glare of the day is

on us, and in half an hour the heat is unpleasantly strong on my back, so that the coat and cardigan are shed, which were scarcely sufficient to keep me warm an hour before.

Partridges begin to call and an occasional party of sandgrouse flies chuckling overhead, so I said I would dismount to walk and use the gun. In former years I had ridden camels a great deal in Somaliland, but always alone and in the front seat of the double saddle. Here I had to depend on indifferent local animals, which would not stand being ridden by a strange white man, so I had to sit on the back seat, while the owner drove from the front. Behind me were two other camels, my bearer riding behind on one, and the other carrying a small store of food and cooking pots.

My seat had been piled up with a quilt and two blankets on starting, and had then been very comfortable, but they had sunk downwards and outwards to such an extent that my thighs had been thrust wide apart, so that I was very stiff and sore from the fifteen-mile ride.

The driver said " Oosh " to the camel (which seems a universal signal). The ungainly brute halted, lurched fore and aft, and folded up. I slid off and promptly sat down hard on the track ; so stiff that I could not control my legs, and had to work them about and massage them for some minutes before I could set off with the gun. However, a quarter of a mile got me going fairly well, and one or two side excursions produced two brace of partridges.

Remounting after a couple of miles' walking we trotted on, and, passing through a two-mile strip of cultivation, came on the dak bungalow, which was to be our halting-place ; a square white-washed building set on a barren plain, with a ruined mud serai 200 yards

beyond it, and the arched black caverns of the doorless servants' quarters set in a row behind.

We set about boiling some water, and the two baggage camels arriving an hour later, we all had a good meal and then had a well-earned sleep. Two nights and days in a jolting, dusty train ; a busy afternoon packing and loading kit, and then a start at 2 A.M., all tend to make any bed a good one. Four o'clock and some tea, and then a wander round the vicinity, which produced four brace of sandgrouse and half that number of partridges, dinner, and so to bed.

Not quite so early a start next day, but sunrise found us two miles on our way entering a gap in the hills flanked by steep cliffs and filled by long, deep-blue pools ; at the shallow end of which some yellow-legged herring gulls paddled and four whimbrel paced close by them, using their long, curved beaks to probe the mud.

A mile of rock and rough going, then we mounted and trotted on over undulating reddish ground sloping down from the 500-feet ridge on our right, broken every 200 yards by deep water-worn gullies. To our left was the flat bottom of a scrub-filled valley two or three miles wide, along which wound a dry, stony river-bed, and whose far side was flanked by a much higher range, its white limestone tops rising to 1000 feet above the valley.

We were now going north, with a stiff breeze in our faces, and walking through the scrub, I found it interspersed with low clumps of a grey broom-like bush, which harboured a little butterfly : a " blue " which takes its exercise by flying round and round inside the sheltering plant stalks, when a howling gale rages outside, as it so often does in Sind.

Now and then we came across a big clump of a tall,

small-leaved shrub round which fluttered numbers of salmon-pink or light-yellow *colotis* butterflies. Once, on shooting a partridge which fell inside a thick-stemmed, brittle, dark-green bush, I broke some of the stems in pulling it out, and the juice exuded on my forearm ; setting up a violent, burning irritation which was most trying and did not subside for an hour.

About 11 A.M. we reached a small village and some cultivation, mostly millet and maize, at the north end of which was a small but pleasant fruit garden of lime and pomegranate trees, where we halted for lunch ; the baggage camels passing through while I was hunting butterflies after the repast. On again, and about half-past three we camped by a little cultivation at a bend of the river-bed, where the water rose to the surface in a series of small reedy pools, with an exiguous trickle between them.

The baggage camels had arrived with us, and the tent is pitched, after which I take the gun and a couple of coolis to try for some of the partridges whose insistent " tee-teetur, tee-teetur " rings stridently from the fields near by.

We soon flush several, but the shooting is extremely difficult, not only on account of the numerous thorn-trees, but because the few local inhabitants flock over from some miserable, temporary hovels, all determined to see the fun ; usually from a position in dead line with the bird. The difficulty is got over by enlisting the whole lot as beaters and they joyfully seem to be bent on destroying their own crops and yell with delight as a high bird, wheeling back, comes down with a thud in the middle of them.

The last bird to be fired at provided a curious incident. We were walking towards the camp and about 150 yards from it, when a partridge rose and towered

to the shot. It then came down in a long glide, which took it into my tent-door, where it fell dead on my bed. My bearer was putting out my clothes at the time and one would have thought that he would have been somewhat startled, but all he did was to cut the bird's throat, thus making it lawful food for himself, a Mahomedan, and remarking on my arrival that it had been a very good "bandobast" on my part. He of course knew that I was shooting for the whole camp, and not for myself alone.

Tea and hot, light scones, beautifully cooked by my bearer, and then a try at the pools, where three couple of snipe were killed; then, just as I was turning to go home, a few duck began to come down in the dusk, and five were killed before it was too dark to see them.

Throughout dinner I heard the sound of their wings as they came down from the north, and twice in the night I woke to hear a clamour of trumpet-cries, as myriads of geese and cranes passed high above my tent.

On again at dawn, through four miles of scrub and sand, to a long gravelly ridge running down to the river-bed, on which were some curiously ornamented Mahomedan tombs. Then a mile to the end of a low spur with a flat piece of ground covered by big tamarisk trees, which offered a pleasant camping ground by some pools; and, as the valley narrowed here, it seemed to afford a good chance at flighting duck. I sat down on a fallen log to rest in the shade, and, a minute later, was plunging through the undergrowth, my bare knees thoroughly stung by wasps which had a nest beneath it. Fortunately there was only another six miles to go, so, as the swellings made riding impossible, I walked it; passing through scattered huts and cultivation for the last two miles to reach a mud-wall police post and a simple two-roomed rest hut.

As we had emerged through the last gap, the hills to our left had ended, and the river came down from the west, another higher and more forbidding block stretching like an enormous battleship to the north of it for three or four miles. This was the ibex ground I had come to hunt, and soon the thanadar, as the local minor police officer is called, came over to see me and to offer his help.

The local police trackers or "paggis" were here the official shikaris, and he said he would get hold of the three best for me within a couple of hours.

Then we consulted as to the place for camp. There was no water on the ground, and, although they looked to my eyes no more than three, the thanadar said that the hills were over five miles distant. This meant carrying water up to the bivouac on camels; then camels and waterpots were scarce, while more men at the bivouac meant more water to carry up. He advised that only the paggis should bivouac on the ground and that I should ride up to meet them in the early morning. This would add another two hours to the day's work, but it seemed the best solution. The only thing that worried me was that I was terribly stiff and sore, but I assumed that this would wear off very greatly in the night, and agreed to the plan.

Three paggis were therefore sent off to look for ibex, and left shortly after the baggage came in, about midday.

An afternoon with the shot-gun resulted in a few partridges, and shooting a few doves for the thanadar, as they flighted home from the fields, seemed to impress the local gentry with my prowess as a shot, and pleased the thanadar by the addition to his evening meal.

Dawn being about a quarter to six, I left on a camel at half-past four. I soon discovered that, far from my

stiffness having worn off, it was absolute agony to ride the camel, and a couple of miles was all I could bear, so that I had to get off and walk. I also discovered that my original estimate of the distance to the foot of the hill had been hopelessly inaccurate, while the thanadar's was also under the mark, as it was a good six and a half miles to where I found two paggis sitting under a rock smoking, the third being up on the hill after ibex.

Wild, shaggy-looking men, clad in dingy garments, with a leather brass-buckled belt showing their official status as police employees. They looked extraordinarily tough, burnt dark by the sun and hot winds, and able to subsist long without food and water like the lean, gamey-looking riding-camels of their country. They took my rifle, haversack, water-bottle and camera, while I was quite content with the glasses, knowing that in all probability I was in for a long and tiring day, and we set off up a stony nullah, between big cliffs, and soon began to climb a steep, rocky gully to the crest of the hills.

Owing to my miscalculations we had started a little late, but it was cold weather and the ibex would probably feed pretty late and lie out in the open after feeding, so it was not very important ; except that it shortened the time available.

An hour's plugging uphill brought us to a ridge running down eastward from a great bluff, and we sat on a knob commanding a series of smaller ridges and gullies running parallel to us and above us, which ended precipitately in the great cleft which formed the head of the nullah we had ascended. Across this we looked at easy slopes above the further cliff, and these seemed all to be limestone covered with whitish gravel, while our side was all conglomerate rock and darker

soil. Thorn bushes, cacti, spear-grass and sharp-edged limestone rocks were scattered everywhere, while above the extreme edge of the nullah on its left (or southern) side, a fissured crest of sheer crags showed up a broken row of blunted giant's teeth against the sky.

A few light-brown ewes appeared on the crest of the bluff behind us, and we waited for a couple of hours hoping for a good buck to appear, but although over forty eventually appeared and fed quietly on our side the hill, the herd moved quietly on without ever a good head joining them.

On we plugged, by a very rough track across a cliff face up to a further ridge, and climbing to the top, inspected the broken ground under the giant's teeth. I soon spotted some ewes, and then a couple of bucks. The ewes were the usual brown, but the bucks were very light brown with a dark shoulder stripe as I had expected. But I had not gathered that an old Sind ibex buck is almost white, and also that he only stands about 32½ inches at the shoulder. I had been accustomed to judge Himalayan ibex horns, where a 40-inch head is a good one and a big buck stands nearly that much at the shoulder. Consequently I judged the horns of the two bucks I now saw at 41 and 40 inches respectively, and immediately planned a stalk.

It was easy. Up a small side ravine and a short scramble up a ridge, through thorns of every description ; then a cautious reconnaissance round a rock, and I found myself in full view of the ibex. I should have thought the range to be about 150 yards, but the bucks looked so small for what the books said should be 36 to 37 inches at the shoulder, that it surely must be over 200. Sighting for that range, I fired at the biggest buck. The bullet splashed on a rock just above his withers. He bolted twenty yards down-hill and stopped,

but I now had the sighting and he pitched forward to a second shot and slid head first down-hill, stone dead. Walking forward there was no doubt that my first estimate of the range was correct, and the buck looked strangely small when I reached him. Horns 37 inches, and no wonder they had looked large, for he was only 32 inches at the shoulder.

A disappointing result, but still I knew now what to look out for, and ought to make no further mistakes.

We skinned the buck and cut away the head from the body, then all sat down to have a little food.

While lying amongst the rocks two old bucks suddenly appeared on the toothed crest above us and about 500 yards away, and now I saw what a big ibex looks like. Undoubtedly these were over 40 inches, each about 42 I thought, and their horns looked simply immense for their bodies. They came leaping down a precipice, then descended into the dip at the head of the valley, and were lost to sight in broken, jungle-covered ground.

We pushed on to try and find them and found ourselves held up in a maze of deep gullies, enormous tumbled boulders, and thorns of every description; cactus, acacia and spear-grass predominating. Having got through perspiring, bad-tempered and considerably the worse for wear, on ascending a low rise beyond, the two bucks were now tiny silhouettes on a crest a mile away. As we looked they turned and disappeared. "No good, Sahib," said the leading paggi, "they have gone down into the big cliffs below to lie up, and it would take several hours to find them."

Feeling a bit cross with the world in general, I sat down again and happened to look back at the toothed cliff again, and there was a big herd sixty strong coming

over the top. Under cover we went, but we had only been about 600 yards away, and I was almost certain they had seen us. They crossed the dip in a long string and it was certain that something was wrong, for they moved uneasily and did not browse at all. Four fine old bucks were with the herd, and these kept well on the far side of the others. They went over to where half-a-dozen low hills, about 100 feet high, cropped out of the main slopes about half a mile from us, and lay down in commanding positions on and about them.

Wind wrong, light wrong, an almost impregnable position, and only a couple of hours of daylight left. A hopeless case. "Home John!" Down the hill weary and stiff, and then the lurching camel back to camp, with the first ibex strapped on behind.

Up again at 3 A.M., but the stiffness nearly gone, and I was with the paggis at the foot of the hill shortly after dawn.

We had decided the previous evening that the big herd would probably be feeding behind the big toothed crest to the south in the morning, so, on reaching the ridge from which we had first spied, we climbed straight up the crags above. Nasty sharp-edged rocks, tearing the skin of hands or knees. Great fissures between them which had to be jumped: a most uncomfortable performance.

On the crest we met a biting wind, which made walking still more difficult, and found that the country beyond was a series of long ridges, twisting and turning, but generally running southwards; deep ravines between them banded with long stretches of sheer cliff, and the whole ground barren except for small shrubs or occasional scrubby acacias and oleanders in the ravines. Not at all a promising-looking country, but the paggis assured me that it was a good place and

the big herd had obviously been there the previous day.

Carefully we skirted the edges of the ravines and looked down into them. Half-a-dozen ewes in one place, nothing more. Crossing the head of each ravine near the crest of the main ridge gave us some stiff climbing, as each was a 200-foot cut in limestone, fissured like immense cracks in sun-baked mud, and the edges of the crags so sharp that hands, knees and clothes suffered severely. Eventually we reached the highest point, where the fissured rocks were jumbled like a bad set of teeth, and passing through a big crack, lay in a small cave in the face of the cliff looking out northwards over the ground where we had left the big herd the previous day.

We had been there perhaps twenty minutes when they began to appear, feeding slowly towards us, over the further crest, more than a mile away. The brutes had fed on the other side of the plateau that morning. It was no use waiting, in fact it was essential to get down off the slopes facing them and into the broken ground below before they got too near.

A rapid and painful scramble down a " chimney " ; then through a nasty lot of thorny acacias along a tortuous gully, and we were well under cover. The highest knob in the centre of the broken ground was easily accessible, and from there it looked as if the ibex were delivered into my hand, for they were entering the lower ground through which I had passed the previous evening, and which was so broken that I could hardly fail to get a shot, the wind being steady and favourable.

However, it was not as easy as it looked. The centre of the dip was almost flat, and a mass of big rocks, thorns, creepers and spear-grass. By the time

I had gone a hundred yards through it I was bleeding freely from scratches on my bare arms and knees, my putties were covered with a sort of fur of spear-grass seeds, my face was sticky with cobwebs, and I was sweating and swearing in most unbecoming fashion.

I pushed on, very uncertain of my bearings, and emerged at the edge of an open space just as the forms of half-a-dozen ewes showed 150 yards away in the bushes on the far side. Dropping flat on a collection of dead thorns which made me curse still more, I lay in pain and suspense wondering if they had seen me. They had evidently seen something, for two old ewes walked out and stood staring at the place where I lay, and kept me motionless and in painful mental and bodily suspense for some minutes as others joined them. Then they all pretended to run away a short distance, to draw the possible enemy, and stood about on small hillocks, and finally moved away slowly and satisfied in the opposite direction.

I climbed a mound of rocks, and made out most of the rest of the herd feeding quietly about 350 yards away with a big barrier of rocks within easy range of them and to their left. Running back to where I had dropped the paggis under cover, I explained the situation and started round on a wide half-circle to the left until we had put the rocks between us and the herd, and were then able to advance with ease under their shelter.

Peeping over a big flat boulder, I saw the whole herd lying down on a flat piece of ground on the edge of a big ravine, the four big bucks about a hundred yards away in the middle of them. They all seemed about the same size, and selecting the easiest shot I pushed the rifle carefully over the top of the rock and fired. Up flew a splinter of stone, and the bullet went singing away over the herd as they poured over the edge of the

ravine in a surging mass, which precluded any possibility of firing a second shot at a picked animal. I had hit a small stone projection which, though clear of the foresight, was not quite clear of the muzzle.

Furious and sick with disappointment I ran hard for the brink of the ravine into which the herd had disappeared. They were cantering or trotting up the far side, but were beginning to slow down a bit, the big bucks towards the tail.

Sitting down I took a careful aim at one which was clear of the herd, and kept on him, waiting until he should stop to look back. He halted on a small knob. Two hundred and fifty if it's a yard. "Bang", and he was rolling down the hill-side and there was a yell of triumph from the paggis as he lay kicking in a bush below. A scramble down which involved more cuts and scrapes, this time quite unsworn at, and we reached the buck, which was duly made "halal", or lawful food, by the Mahomedans cutting his throat with the usual pious injunctions.

A good head, 42 inches long, and a really nice specimen for my collection.

Down the hill again an hour later, and back to the police post, where the head was duly admired and skinned.

I had skinned the entire animal for museum mounting on shooting the first ibex, and a tragedy befell at the dak bungalow of the last stage. I had put the skin in the verandah to air and was sorting some butterflies. Twenty minutes later I looked out. The skin had gone.

I spotted movement behind a bush, and there was a brute of a pariah dog chewing and tearing at the skin. I ran towards him shouting, and recovered it minus a foreleg with which he slunk off.

Running back for my gun I chased him for half a mile, and eventually a charge of 4's at about sixty yards made him drop it, but a 10-inch strip was entirely missing and the skin useless for mounting, so this meant another trip later on.

The Second Trip

Two years later I was padding along once again towards the hills, but taking it easy this time, as I was on longer leave and collecting birds and small mammals as well, while butterflies were also of interest.

We passed the first bungalow, seeing a small herd of gazelle on the sand-hills, which I vainly pursued. Then we went leisurely through the first gorge, and past the deep blue pools which had, owing to recent rain, spread into an acre of water at one end, in which half-a-dozen widgeon swam and gave me an easy shot as they rose and flew over my head.

The stumpy, prickly-looking lizard (*Uromastix hardwickei*) scuttled away and hid his two foot of ugliness in holes at our approach, while two species of gerbil, which look rather like large dormice, inhabited the sand-blown base of nearly every low thorn bush in favoured places. The holes of these two were easily distinguishable, for, while one was circular, the entrance to the other was shaped like that of a railway tunnel with a flat sill.

Again we halted where I had shot partridges before ; but the fields had been cut, so I made a more thorough exploration of the river-bed and beat the reeds, getting a common bittern and a little bittern for the collection, and several snipe for the pot, while the evening flight produced half-a-dozen duck, one of them a widgeon in that interesting transition plumage, known as "eclipse",

which precedes the full winter feathering. By next morning the traps had produced several gerbils, so the professional skinner with me had his hands full, and sat down to a hard day's work when we camped a few miles short of the police post, by a low ridge where the stony river-bed held a series of long shallow pools.

A nice camp under shady tamarisk, and, though the water was hard, it was only very slightly brackish.

Evening came, but the duck flighting was poorer than I expected, so that I was agreeably surprised early next morning to hear the welcome " whew, whew " of wings and ran down to the river-bed to spend a lively twenty minutes which resulted in as many duck: mallard, gadwall, widgeon and a couple of teal. Then, visiting the traps put over-night, there was a great prize in one, namely, a spiny mouse. The latter parts of these curious little beasts are covered with spines like a hedgehog's from the ribs backwards and half-way down the tail. This was a yellowish-coloured specimen, and looking at it I was quite sure that it was that very rare mouse (*Acomys flavidus*), and later I found that this was so, and that the first of the very few specimens in existence had been taken by Hutton over forty years before quite close to this same spot.

We stayed on a day, and I had a long hunt for little bustard, whose three-toed, heelless tracks were common amongst the scrub and tamarisk of the plain; but I saw none at all, and the chief results of the evening were a fine mallard pulled down out of the sky with a very tall shot which made me proud of my shooting, until my pride suffered through a tufted pochard which swung round a bend and was missed clean at easy range with both barrels. A marbled teal was one of the bag, and a gadwall, which had carried on nearly 400 yards from my stand a quarter of a mile above camp, was fortunately

recovered on the way back to my tent, by my almost walking on it where it lay in a small open space amongst the tamarisk.

I had brought a couple of pakhals, or 12-gallon metal water-tanks, with me this time, so we marched right through the last village, where I met my friend the police thanadar, and found he had made arrangements for paggis and to send up more water.

Camp, or rather "bivouac", was made in the ravine at the foot of the ibex hill, where I had met the paggis on my former trip, and every receptacle was filled with water, including some 1½-gallon canvas water-bags, known as "chaguls", and the tanks sent back to the police post to be filled. The bivouac (there was no room and it was too stony to pitch the tents) was very hot at first, but in the evening a cool breeze sprung up as some ibex appeared high up on a big cliff above us, where the ground looked too bad for any animal. They fed on a projecting shoulder for a while, then retired up the cliff; six old bucks looking like dull white spots in the dusk long after the others were invisible. It made me wonder why they were coloured so conspicuously: a certain advantage to their chief enemies, men and leopards.

Before dawn we were stumbling up the ravine, stubbing our toes on boulders in the pale light of the moon's last quarter, and by sunrise we were well up on the first big ridge. A couple of hours here and two ewes were all we saw, so we pushed on to the other side of the main divide, and into the hills to the north beyond the spot where I had got my best buck before. Here we came on a small herd of wild sheep, "gud" as they are called in Sind; "oorial" in the Punjab.

There were a couple of good rams among them, one certainly over 30 inches, but ibex was what I wanted,

so we slipped past them down a deep cliff-side rock amphitheatre (it is bad to disturb game unnecessarily ; the alarm is nearly always communicated) and up on to a stony ridge. Beyond was a series of long spurs running down to the further plain like ribs from the main spine of the hills, and on one, a mile away, were several light spots. Ibex they were ; a big herd a hundred strong, some feeding, some resting : undoubtedly some good heads among them.

Down to the main valley, through thorns and cacti at the bottom, until we reached the mouth of a gully parallel to and next but one to that on which the herd was lying. Up this and some nasty scrambling to surmount a big face of loose rock, and there was the herd 150 yards away.

I lay behind a bush and inspected all the bucks I could see. There were three good ones lying facing me right on the crest of their ridge, but too awkwardly placed for a shoot. I could see the horns of two more sticking up from behind a small knoll to the right, and after waiting and pondering for half an hour while the sun was uncomfortably hot on my spine, I decided that I might get a clear shot at one of these by moving about sixty yards up my ridge to the right. Accordingly I slipped back, crept along to a little gutter up which I crawled, and reached the crest and the cover of a rock. Peering cautiously round this I found myself looking into the astonished faces of three ewes at about the same number of yards. We gazed at each other stricken motionless for several seconds, then the warning whistles sounded, off went the ewes, and away they went with a dozen more which had been further down the slope ; I sat up and settled myself for a possible chance at the two bucks, and they stood up nice and clear for a couple of seconds. But before I could fire

they were covered by a stream of animals rushing down from the right, and the whole herd poured over the crest and round the end of their spur. It was useless attempting to run on for a shot, as there was a small cliff between us which would take several minutes to surmount, so that was that, damn it!

Back to the highest point and then lunch we decided; so toiled up the southern slopes, clambered from rock to rock to the toothed crest and lay on a great slab overlooking the ridge to the south, trying to imagine that a starving acacia afforded some shelter from the sun.

A drink of water was most welcome, and also a little food, after which I began to look round again.

A herd lying right out on a small plateau a mile to the west; obviously nothing worth worrying about amongst them. Then another small herd appeared moving on the shady side of one of the big, cliff-sided ravines right below us. It was hard to see them, as there were a good number of thorn bushes on the cliff, but one or two bucks appeared to be very light in colour, so about 3 o'clock I climbed down and made my way along the upper edge of the cliff, covered from view by a small projecting spur. Reaching this I crawled carefully over the top. There was a rush from under me and out bounced a buck ibex, with horns about 35 inches long, from a cave just below the further edge, and, jumping on a small rock, stood gazing into the valley below, and not five yards from me. I would have given anything to have had my camera handy. He stood there for at least a quarter of a minute, then suddenly looked round and stared full at me. Two seconds and he was going hard down the cliff in tremendous bounds, and away went the herd with him in a whirl of stones and dust. They stopped on the opposite side of the

ravine, and I could see that there was no really good head among them.

I sat down on a rock, feeling weary and disappointed, and signalled to the paggis to come down to me. They came moving along the crest of the spur, so I moved up also. I reached the top, and glanced casually down the further ravine. Ibex quite close! A herd of thirty with two good bucks feeding on the far side and about 350 yards down. I dropped behind a rock and looked back to see the paggis also flat on their faces and looking inquiringly at me from about forty yards away. We crawled back behind the crest and I told them the situation. It was impossible to get any further along the face of the cliff below the crest of the ridge, while the crest itself was in full view owing to a bend, while time (it was now after 4 o'clock) precluded a long circuitous stalk.

I crawled up to the top and had another look, then resolved to try a last resort. Aiming four or five feet above the furthest animal of the herd, I fired. The bullet made a grand splash amongst the small, loose stones, and, as I had hoped, the whole lot raced up the nullah towards us along the further side.

They were slowing down, but still trotting or cantering steadily as they passed, but their line was unchangeable, and I was absolutely determined to kill. I believe that fierce concentration on such an occasion does a lot towards achieving one's object, and one shot each sent the two big bucks rolling down the hill and my paggis racing to " halal " them.

One very good head 43½ inches, and the other, upstanding horns with very little curve, 39 inches. Good business. A head for my collection and the museum skin I wanted, both come to hand.

It was half-past four when I killed the ibex, and the

sun just setting by the time we had the skins off. The paggi carrying the " chagul " with the day's water had torn it on a rock, and practically none remained, so it was a very weary and thirsty party which reached the crest of the main ridge and clambered down the other side in the dusk.

We got on to the track, and after a mile the paggis said they were done and would go down into a deep gully to search for a possible supply of water in a hole at the bottom. I decided to push on in the dark, as I thought by now I knew the way, and successfully crossed the last big ridge and began the long descent to the valley in which the bivouac lay. Here I got too confident, and must have walked straight on at a bend, so that feeling suspicious in the gloom, I gripped the nearest rock and felt very carefully with my foot for the next step. There was nothing, and I realised that I had walked on to the edge of the cliff overhanging the plain. Very unpleasant.

Carefully, step by step, the way was retraced, the track found and the descent accomplished to the ravine below, along which I stumbled, at the cost of bruised shins and thorn-scratched arms, and got into the bivouac a little before 9 o'clock, after fourteen hours on the hill.

I was so thirsty that I had to drink carefully, and so done that it was several minutes before I could answer my servant's eager questions. " I knew you must have killed far away, Sahib, but two big ibex at once will be a great tale to tell the regiment."

The paggis staggered in, dead-beat, an hour later. They had carried in the heads and skins among the three of them, having cached most of the meat, while I had the rifle and all the rest of the paraphernalia.

Two men who had come up with water-camels were

A GAP IN THE OUTER HILLS.

THE DAY'S BAG.

To face page 154.

at the bivouac, so I sent one back in the dark to bring up all my camels in the early morning, and we shifted back to the police post, where the thanadar was rejoiced with a present of meat, and the paggis with several rupees apiece as bakshish ; so that we left a general atmosphere of content behind us next day, and marched back at leisure taking toll of duck and sandgrouse, and collecting as we went.

LESSER KUDU

Of all the many animals that I have hunted, the lesser kudu bears the palm for grace and beauty. Not only is he beautiful in the colouring of his white-striped dun-grey coat, his large leaf-like ears, and slanting spiral horns, but he is nearly always to be found in attractive surroundings, and in bush at all times. Bush composed of dense creeper-covered thorn, with here and there small park-like tussocky tracts set with scattered trees, and, where the river-beds lie, dense thickets of feathery tamarisk, clogged at the ends of many of the sprays where they overhang crystal-clear pools, by the pendulous nests of the gold and black weaver bird.

To beauty of form he adds grace of movement and marvellous jumping powers. The first time I ever saw one, I was tracking a leopard in rough ground at the base of the Golis range in Northern Somaliland. Suddenly I was startled by a rush through the bush a few yards to my right, and on jumping on a near-by ant-hill, was amazed to see a lesser kudu bull appear in the air in front of me, disappear behind the bush he had jumped, and then reappear in a series of immense bounds until he eventually reached a small ravine and bolted down it. His horns were not big enough to make him worth shooting, but even if they had been, hitting antelope on the wing in intermittent fractional

parts of a second has never seemed to me to be an easy job. I measured his first big jump and made it thirty-three feet between the footprints, with a thick six-foot-high bush between. A wonderful leap: all the more extraordinary since he could hardly have known on what he was going to land at the finish of it.

Later that year I made a short trip specially to obtain a specimen for my collection; I was stationed in Somaliland at Sheikh (at that time the headquarters of my battalion of the King's African Rifles), a small but delightful post on the top of the Golis plateau. The Golis range is like an immense step facing northward with the forty miles of the Maritime Plain, broken by the low hills of the Maritime Range, between it and the coast. To the south the country trends gradually away from the crest line down to Jubaland, 350 miles away, and its flat surface is only broken by a few small ranges, such as the line of plateaux to the south of the Suksode Plain and the Bur Dab Mountains; all of which have a steep face on the north side and slope away to the general level of the plains on the south, resembling big wedge-shaped slices of cake laid flat in a row with their thick ends to the north.

After much earnest study of the map of the country at the foot of the range, I sent my shikari and another Somali who knew the district to try the ground near a river-bed which I knew held water here and there, and which lay some thirty odd miles north-east of Sheikh. I knew that there were a very few lesser kudu at the immediate foot of the hills, but no one seemed to have tried the country beyond. In four days they were back, having seen several lesser kudu (three being good bulls), numerous large warthog, several gerenuk, a leopard, and the fresh tracks of two lynx. A most

excellent report, as I still wanted a big pair of warthog tusks, and had never set eyes on a lynx.

Three days later I walked to the foot of the hills after dinner, slept at the hut at the bottom of the Sheikh Pass, and left before dawn next morning. Traversing a stony plain criss-crossed with narrow gullies, and thickly dotted with low umbrella-shaped khansa thorn, on which we saw a few gerenuk, about mid-day we reached the river-bed where it passed between two low hills. Adan Gulaid, my shikari, said that the best place to camp was about five miles down, so I occupied myself with inspecting the bank for tracks, and examining the general lie of the country. There was clear but slightly brackish water in pools for the first three miles, then it vanished altogether under the sand, not reappearing till joined by a small side trickle two miles further on, after which it was lost for good. These river-beds are called "tug" in Somali. Some are quite dry, and water is only obtainable by digging at known places, usually many miles apart, and then only at certain seasons of the year. The banks of this particular "tug" were lined with tamarisk, and twenty yards further in was a belt of dense bush varying from fifty to two hundred yards in width. Beyond this again low gravelly ridges rose about four hundred yards from the "tug", the interval being filled with open thorn jungle. The trees were mostly thorny acacias, many of them heavily cloaked with the fleshy-leaved "arno" creeper, on whose red berries clumsy hornbills fed greedily, and there were also a good many dhak trees and an occasional banyan. The undergrowth consisted largely of patches of the spiky aloe known as "hig" to the Somalis, on which lesser kudu feed when water is scarce (the thick juicy leaves supplying the deficiency), and in many places were large

LESSER KUDU GROUND. WITH A WART HOG IN THE MIDDLE DISTANCE.

To face page 158.

clumps of that curious leafless bush called "irgin", which looks like an immense tangled mop of grass-green hair, half an inch thick. These "irgin" clumps grow to 10 feet in height and 40 feet in diameter, and the broken stems exude a poisonous milky juice which often blinds a camel incautiously thrusting its head among the shoots to reach some food plant growing under them.

We found no tracks at all in the first three miles, but in the next mile a few old tracks of kudu could be discerned here and there. Time was taken up in searching, and when we reached the camping ground by the lowest point where water showed on the surface the loads were already being taken off the camels. The tents were pitched under some tall acacias, and lunch soon on the table. After lunch I called up Adan Gulaid and we discussed the plan of campaign. He said that the three kudu bulls he had seen were in the bush three miles north of camp, so I thought we would leave that till the morrow, and try up the little side nullah opposite camp for a warthog.

We left at 4 o'clock and walked up the nullah, which held water almost continuously for three-quarters of a mile, the last of it being a lovely grass-bordered tamarisk-shaded pool on which a couple of teal were swimming. Leaving the bed of the nullah at this point, Adan led me up the high cliff-like bank, and pushing through a thick screen of bush and creeper I found myself looking into a big depression some hundred yards across. In the middle of this was a fine warthog, grubbing furiously on his knees, as is the habit of these grotesquely ugly beasts when feeding. He showed fine tusks, so I promptly put a bullet through his heart. The Somalis, being Mussulmans, of course would not touch the unclean beast, so I sent them on to have a

look round for tracks or any other traces of game, telling them to return in twenty minutes' time.

I had skinned the warthog from the shoulders to the ears, and having cut through the flesh was twisting the head off at its junction with the neck, when back came Adan at a run. "Two lesser kudu bulls! Come quick." One final twist, a slash of the knife, and the head parted company with the neck. I rammed it into the fork of a creeper-covered tree, picked up the rifle and field glasses, and followed Adan at a trot. Within 500 yards we came on Egal, the second shikari, lying flat under a bush at the top of a gravelly ridge. We dropped on our hands and knees and crawled up to him. "They have just gone up that ridge into those bushes," he said, pointing out a thick patch 200 yards away.

"No, they were not frightened, a little suspicious perhaps." Leaving Egal where he was, I crawled back with Adan till we were under cover of the ridge, then ran round the end of it, a hundred yards to the left, and up the gully between it and the ridge the kudu had crossed. Going a little way up the slope on their tracks, I looked back to Egal. He held up his hand, palm forward, to show that he had seen nothing more. Cautiously we climbed the slope and nearer and nearer became the patch of bush until we could see nearly down to its roots. Suddenly Adan gave a "Pst" and pointed to the right. There, seventy-five yards away, was the head of a beautiful lesser kudu bull framed in a small opening between two thorn trees and gazing straight at us. I threw up the rifle, and fired at the lowest visible point of his throat. The head disappeared, and out dashed two bulls. Thinking I had missed I let drive at the bigger of the two, and down he came on his knees, but was up again immediately and

out of sight. Running past the patch from which they had emerged, I found a heavy blood trail, and in another 200 yards put up my bull within five paces of me out of thick tamarisk, and finished him. A nice head 26½ inches on the curve and 21 inches straight. "Quite good," I said to Adan. "I think the other is bigger," said he. I stared at him. "What other?" "The first one you killed," he replied; "I saw him lying dead as we ran past."

I walked back with mixed feelings. My licence allowed only one lesser kudu and here I had shot two. We soon reached the first bull. He lay just where I had first seen him, and my bullet had struck the exact spot I had aimed at. A prettier head than the other; 27 inches on the curve and 21¾ inches straight.

Later, on my return to Sheikh, I reported my misdeed to the authority at Berbera, explaining the circumstances, and received a letter in reply, from which I gathered that as a criminal I ranked with but slightly in advance of Crippen and Jack the Ripper, with Charles Peace and the Borgias in the "also ran" list. The letter ended by confiscating the horns and skin of the second bull, which I duly forwarded. I afterwards saw the horns adorning the wall of an official residence in Berbera, and the owner of the bungalow told me a most interesting story after dinner as to how he had shot the bull that carried them. It was quite a good story: even de Rougemont might well have been proud of it.

Next year the evening of the same date found me riding into camp at the same place, again with lesser kudu as my objective. By sunrise on the morrow I was working the bush three miles down the "tug", and the misfortunes of the day began early. Coming suddenly round a clump of irgin I almost walked on a fine red lynx or caracal, who was rolling in a patch of

soft sand. He was so close and I was so taken by surprise that I fired at him without putting my rifle to my shoulder. Of course I missed, and the lynx bolted into a thick clump of thorns right on the edge of the "tug". He had evidently stayed there, so I posted myself on the bank and told Adan and Egal to try and drive him across it. They had only to push in a little, and out he came, and I missed him handsomely as he raced across the sandy bed. It was too great a disaster to be relieved by a few hearty cuss words, and we went on in silence. Twenty minutes later we were trying some bush on the east or right bank of the "tug", when there came a series of crashes all round us, and the place seemed alive with leaping, rushing kudu. Three cows dashed past within five yards of me, one bucking sideways over another in her hurry to get to where she did not quite know, then a shout from Egal made me sprint in his direction just in time to see just enough of a bull to make me want to see more of him. By his tracks he should be a good one, so we took them up. He had parted from the herd, and made off due east (camp lay south of us) for the first mile; then he had evidently slowed down, for the gravel spurts were smaller, the heel marks clearer, and the tracks in more regular sequence instead of the three and one of the cantering animal. He turned south-east, and an hour's tracking brought us to a maze of stony ridges and patches of thick bush. Another hour, in a south-westerly direction, and it became evident that our bull was playing a game of "I spy" with us, the odds on him as winner being very heavy. The sun grew hotter and hotter, and still we plodded on, without even having got a sight of him. He was evidently feeling the heat as much as we were, for he stopped frequently, and suddenly, about mid-day, there was a crash of

LESSER KUDU. THE BULL.

To face page 162.

breaking boughs just ahead, that told us that he had only just got away without showing himself. Half an hour later he made off from within twenty yards of us, and I found that he had been lying down. Two hundred yards further on I jumped him in tamarisk so thick that I got within five yards without seeing more than a fleeting patch of grey hide. Another quarter of a mile, and the same thing happened again. By this time the kudu had worked round three-quarters of a circle, and we were in the small "tug" which joined the main one opposite camp. It was a question which of us was the most exhausted, and when I saw the bull walk with hanging head across the stream 300 yards ahead of us, I determined to go to camp, which was only about half a mile distant, and rest till half-past three, being pretty certain that my bull would not move far.

I got back to my tent, dropped into my deck-chair, and gradually absorbed a large and sour lime juice sparklet, while Adan and Egal drank great draughts of water till they plumped out like frogs in a shower of rain. A little lunch, a rest of an hour and a half, and we sallied forth again.

The kudu seemed to be working back to where he had been first found in the morning, so I stationed myself at a likely spot on the north side of the small "tug" and sent the two Somalis round to the south side to disturb him. A quarter of an hour later and Adan gave a shrill whistle, the bull cantering gently across the "tug" some 300 yards below me a few seconds afterwards. I got on to a low mound and made out the direction in which he was travelling, then sprinted hard through the bush to cut him off, taking advantage of a small depression and eventually crouching behind a well-placed ant-hill.

The bull passed me at a slow trot, twenty yards away in the open, and—he was not quite big enough. I judged his horns to be just the same size as those of the bull I had killed the previous year, and I was determined to wait for something bigger. Adan came up to me inquiringly. "Not big enough, Adan," I said; "that's enough for to-day"; and back we went to camp.

Next day we were out till after mid-day without seeing a single fresh track, and in the afternoon I decided to try up the "tug" to the south of camp. We worked a long way up the east bank without seeing anything but a few warthog, and turned to go down the opposite side about an hour before sunset. We travelled a mile and a half without seeing anything but a few tracks, which it was too late in the day to take up, and the sun had just set when we came to a stretch of bush to the west of which there was, I knew, a triangular open patch dotted with trees like a small park, enclosed on two sides by spurs which came down from the main ridges to the thick bush bordering the "tug". This was the last place between us and camp at all likely to hold lesser kudu, so I approached it warily. I pushed my head through a thick drooping creeper, and found myself looking straight at a fine lesser kudu bull, who was lying down about eighty yards away with only his head showing above a thick tussock of grass. He had obviously seen me, and if I let him get on his legs would be off at once, and as I prefer a steady shot at a small mark to a moving shot at a big one, I raised my rifle slowly and aimed at the centre of the tussock of grass under his chin. At the shot a spurt of earth flew in the air out of the grass, which turned out to be a solid lump in the centre; up jumped the bull and bolted for the spur on my left. I guessed that as

soon as he got over it he would make for the thick bush near the "tug", so I sprinted along the edge of it and round the base of the spur. As I reached the far side, there was a clatter of stones and the bull galloped down, crossing my front about forty yards away. I fired. He plunged clean through a big bush on to his nose, staggered up again, gave two or three convulsive leaps which brought him inside the edge of the thick stuff; there was a resounding crash, and I ran up to find him lying dead in the middle of a broken dhak tree, my bullet through his heart. This time it was a really good head; 28½ inches on the curve, 22½ inches straight, and exceptionally thick; 8⅞ inches round the base. He was a very old bull, with three inches of ivory tipping his symmetrical horns. A great ending to two days' hard work.

Fourteen months later I bagged my last and best lesser kudu. I had had a sharp bout of illness due to a quinsy, and the doctor insisted on my taking a week's leave at least, and leaving Sheikh and bugle calls for a while. I decided to go to a place about twenty-five miles to the north, in the broken country below the Golis range, where I knew there was plenty of small game and a few odds and ends such as leopard, gerenuk and klipspringer. There were also a few lesser kudu, I knew, but I did not expect to see one.

I arrived at my camping ground at mid-day, and about 4 o'clock in the afternoon I started off with Adan and Egal to walk up the banks of a wide "tug" to the west of camp for spur fowl, lesser bustard or guinea-fowl, and I of course took the rifle along so as to be ready for anything that might turn up. A mile above camp I noticed some fairly recent tracks of a solitary lesser kudu bull, and, the same distance further on, some made that same evening. I was not seriously

thinking of taking them up, as it was a bit too late in the day, but we came to a thick patch of thorn and creeper, which looked so likely a place for kudu to lie up in that I thought it worth investigating.

The bank had weathered away into a small cliff on the side of the patch furthest from the main bed of the "tug", and was too steep and high for any animal to climb, so it only remained to walk up the sand in the "tug" and at the ends of the patch, looking for the bull's tracks. They were there entering at the bottom end, but there were no signs of his having departed. The patch was about fifty yards long, and very thick, with a slight game trail running through it. I posted Egal at the top end to act as a stop, and having told Adan to push in along the game trail from the broken end, I sat down out of sight under the bank of the "tug", hoping that the bull would break across it and give me an easy going-away shot. But he knew better.

Adan had gone in, perhaps twenty yards, when there were a series of plunges in the bush, a terrific yell from Egal, more crashing and another yell from Adan, and then the rapidly diminishing sounds of the kudu retreating in the direction from which we had come. He had attempted to break past Egal, who had turned him back (with a whack of his stick, he said), had burst on top of Adan and, nearly knocking him down, forced his way past him rather than show in the open, where he had evidently known that I was waiting.

How does an animal know where the chief danger lies? I had made my way to my post under the bank as cautiously as possible; but, even allowing that he had seen me go there, how did the bull know that I had a rifle and Adan and Egal had none? It is by no means the only instance of this discrimination in degrees

of danger by a wild beast that I have experienced, and it never ceases to puzzle me.

Both the Somalis asserted that the bull had a fine pair of horns, and as he had made off in the direction of camp, I decided to follow him. The tracks showed that he had slowed down to a fast walk about 300 yards from where we had jumped him, had halted a short while behind a bush, and then moved on again at a slower pace. It was fairly certain that he would keep a short distance ahead of us, keep looking back on his tracks and move on again as soon as he heard or saw us, feeling pretty safe as long as he did not quite lose connection with us. It was also fairly sure that he would not quit the thick jungle by the side of the "tug" if he could avoid doing so.

The sun was just setting, and I had not time for a prolonged game of hide-and-seek, so I tried to outwit him. Leaving the jungle I walked away from the "tug" for about 250 yards, then moved parallel with it until, half a mile on, I found what I wanted. A low ridge came nearly down to the "tug" and commanded a small opening in the bush through which the kudu must pass about forty yards away or leave the thick cover altogether. I crept to the top of the ridge, and squatted behind a bush. I had told the two Somalis to follow on the bull's tracks after giving me ten or twelve minutes' law, and I soon saw a few small birds fly up from the bush 300 yards away, showing that they were advancing. Once more I had been counting my chickens before they were hatched. My quarry must have seen me crawl to my hiding-place, and he had no intention of crossing the gap which I commanded. Seventy yards away he broke cover as soon as he heard the Somalis advancing, and cantered across the "tug", carefully keeping a tree between me and him. But the "tug" was wide, and the

tree was small, and he was bound to show clear of it before reaching the thick cover of the other side. I waited eagerly ; for I had had a good view of his horns and they were big. He suddenly changed direction, and made for a dense patch of enormous irgin clumps and creeper-draped acacias, at the same time coming into clear view. He was at least 180 yards away, and it was the only chance I would get, so I was greatly relieved to see him give a convulsive jump and fling his heels in the air on my firing. Three great bounds and he was in his fastness ; too late, I hoped.

Judging from his action I guessed that he was hit high up and rather far back, and I raced for the opposite bank to try and recover him before the light should go altogether.

Adan and Egal reached the spot almost as I did. " Dig ! " (blood) they exclaimed, and cast round different sides of the cover for tracks, while I ran forward and stood on an ant-hill in case he should break. No tracks were to be seen. He was still inside.

" I had better go in, Adan," I said, " it is too big for me to cover both sides." I crawled in a little way, and there came a sound of breaking branches. I dashed out and ran for the far side again. Nothing happened. I shouted to Adan and Egal, whom I had posted on neighbouring ant-hills, and they said he had not left the cover. Once more I went back and crawled in under the thorns. Fifteen yards, twenty yards, and I caught sight of a patch of grey hide close to the ground, ten yards in front. Up went my rifle. Not a move from him. I crawled on and found him stretched out stone dead. My bullet had rent both liver and kidneys to shreds ; and his last effort, which I had heard, had been his dying kick.

We soon dragged him out, and I saw what a beauty

he was: 30¼ inches on the curve and 23¾ inches straight; quite the best head shot in Somaliland in the three years I had been there.

We were within a mile of camp, and we got in just as it was dark, carrying the head. The Somalis were a bit sad at first, for he had been too dead for even lax Mussulmans such as they to pretend to "halal" him, and they had no meat. But I gave them a goat as soon as we arrived, and at that they cheered up tremendously.

The interest of the hunt and its eventual success had made me quite forget that I was a convalescent invalid, and after a small bottle of champagne and a good dinner, I fell asleep, listening to the various jungle noises, quite convinced that one good afternoon's shooting was worth all the tonics in the Pharmacopoeia.

QUAINT BEASTS AND QUEER HABITS

EVERY wandering sportsman has at times come across strange animals or observed strange habits or actions of more common species which stand out clear-cut amongst the memories of shooting or fishing trips. Sometimes it is some particular physical feature of the beast, such as the bright orange teeth of the bamboo rat (*Rhizomys badius*) found in Central and Lower Burma; at others it is the general build of the beast whose strangeness makes a first encounter memorable. For instance, the beast known as the armoured pangolin presents a weird and formidable appearance, sheathed as it is in overlapping scale armour, and its four feet or so of length make it a sufficiently alarming apparition when met on the lawn of the mess on a moonlight night after dinner, which was the manner of my first encounter with the species. Another beast which startled me into immediate reminiscences of Alice *Through the Looking-Glass* was a binturong; a quaint medley of fox, badger and raccoon, which ran across my path when travelling up the Salween Valley near the Burma-Siam frontier. Then I defy anyone who has really read and enjoyed the afore-mentioned book not to be reminded of the illustration of a "slithy tove" when he sees his first specimen of an "aard-vark". The first one I ever saw was discovered by the adjutant of my battalion of the King's African Rifles undermining

his tent in the middle of the night when camped in Somaliland. The most strenuous efforts of two lusty officers, who attached themselves to his (the aard-vark's, not the adjutant's) tail, failed to extract him from the hole which he had already dug, and which was about three feet in depth. Finally a revolver bullet finished him, and he was duly photographed and skinned next morning. From the uproar over his capture you might have thought that the dervishes had rushed the camp.

Occasionally it is the incongruity of the beast with its surroundings that strikes one, as anyone will agree who has seen a couple of Himalayan langur monkeys sitting on the snow-laden boughs of a pine. One feels that monkeys and Christmas trees have nothing in common, and that animals which one associates from childhood with hot weather and cocoanut palms should have retired to the plains at the end of the summer in company with the Brass Hats, Grass Widows and Simla Wirepullers.

Talking of monkeys, while on a hill-side high above the Chenab river, I once spotted a troop of monkeys far below on the opposite bank, amongst whom was one the colour of whose coat can only be described as a bright orange. At first I thought that something had gone wrong with my eyesight or my field-glasses, while my shikari stoutly maintained that no monkey was ever coloured like that, therefore it could not be a monkey. To settle the point we descended about a thousand feet until we were opposite the troop and only separated from them by the width of the river, here about eighty yards. We then sat and watched the freak specimen with our glasses for half an hour. He seemed in every respect, save that of colour, to be an ordinary hill macaque, such as swarm in parts of the Lower Hima-

layas ; and his companions seemed to notice nothing queer about him. As we rose to go I asked my shikari what the people of his village would say when he told them that he had seen a monkey of such an outlandish colour. He replied, "They will say I am a liar." When we got back to his village he proved to be absolutely correct, and on my backing his statement, I was obviously looked on as a rather clumsy accomplice.

It was with the same shikari that I one day lay on a hill-side waiting for a serow to come out and feed as soon as the heat of the sun should abate a little, the while I idly directed the telescope on likely places for game. In doing so a goral lying on the opposite side of the valley came into the field. I watched him for a bit without any great interest ; for, though a good buck, I had shot several as big, until he did a thing I have never seen done by any other animal. Some fifty yards from him, in the shade of an overhanging rock, lay a bank of snow some three feet thick which had melted as far as the rays of the sun could reach it and then presented an upright frozen face with an upper edge of almost solid ice, the product of the hard night frosts. The goral rose and walked over to this bank of snow ; then, having evidently become uncomfortably warm through lying in the sun, he proceeded to chew off great lumps from its solid edge, swallowing large quantities and leaving wide gaps in its continuity. This he continued to do for some ten minutes, showing more than a schoolboy's capacity for ices, and almost giving me a sympathetic pain in "Little Mary".

The victim of the most wonderful tragedy of wild life that I have ever witnessed was another wild goat ; an ibex, to wit. A herd was traversing a perilous face of rock by means of a slight fault across its slippery surface. Amongst the herd were several young ones,

and, as one of these crossed behind its mother, down out of the sky swept two great lammergeiers, eight and a half feet from wing-tip to wing-tip, and so beat and buffeted the poor little kid that it finally fell half senseless, and was whirled to destruction on the crags below ; its murderers sailing down to feast on the carcase. I have seen a good deal of the lammergeier in different countries, and never observed a like incident, or indeed heard of their killing anything bigger that a new-born lamb.

As a laughter-provoking nature comedy, it is hard to beat a hungry wolf stalking marmots. He will spend an hour creeping nearer to a marmot who pretends not to see him, but sits solemnly like a fat little alderman, on top of the low mound of earth at the entrance to his burrow, in seeming blissful ignorance of peril. Then, just before the wolf arrives within springing distance, the marmot whips round, whistles shrilly and dives into his home, while the wolf bruises his nose on the doorstep in a wild and futile rush. Then the marmot pops up at another exit a few yards away and challenges the wolf with another whistle, the result again being a profitless attempt by the wolf to secure the fat tempting meal. More members of the marmot colony now appear on the thresholds of their burrows and whistle derisively on every side of the marauder, who, after one or two more vain efforts to secure a dinner, retires in impotent rage from the unequal contest ; usually to lie sulking on the hill-side overlooking the colony in the hope of cutting off a member of it who may, later on, venture too far from home on a grass-gathering expedition.

Twice I have watched this comedy through my telescope, till my sides ached with laughing, and my Tibetan companions (unable to see the cause of my

mirth) suspected me of being suddenly smitten with madness. On the first occasion I rang down the curtain by slaying the would-be slayer ; on the second he was warned by a wandering back-eddy of wind and made off in safety.

Unfortunately for the game, wolves have greatly increased in numbers in Ladakh of late years, and the unusually deep snow in the Rupshu district during the winter of 1910–11 gave them an advantage over their quarry which enabled them almost to annihilate the Tibetan gazelle in some places, and everywhere greatly reduce their numbers and those of the great Tibetan sheep (*Ovis ammon*). For the hard, sharp-edged feet of the sheep and gazelle made them sink deeply into the snow, while the splayed-out pads of the wolves kept them from going far below the surface. The *Ovis ammon*, owing to their greater size and height off the ground, were not nearly so heavily handicapped as the gazelle by the eighteen inches of snow which lay everywhere, and so did not suffer nearly as heavily, while the kiang were hardly affected at all.

In August 1911 I was travelling up the left bank of the Indus close to where it first enters Kashmir territory and flows placid and gentle beside wide flats of short turf. As I walked about half a mile ahead of my baggage yaks, I spotted a wolf, sneaking along a small grassy depression in which three kiangs or Tibetan wild asses were feeding. It seemed to me that a solitary wolf would hardly tackle as big a beast as a kiang, but I was hardly prepared for the utter indifference shown by the latter, who scarcely troubled to raise their heads to stare at the wolf, as he passed between two of them feeding not ten yards apart. I then saw that he was making for a large flock of sheep, which were grazing some 250 yards further on, their

Tibetan shepherds being squatted round a small fire on the river-bank as much again beyond them. The wolf, having arrived within forty yards of the flock, seemed to cover the intervening ground like a streak of lightning and pulled down a ram with one jerk of his powerful jaws, seizing it behind the ears. He then proceeded to tear open the stomach of his prey, while the remainder of the flock fled about eighty yards, and then turned to stare, a huddle of woolly idiocy. The wolf then left his ram and began to trot slowly towards them. When he was within fifty yards they turned and began to flee, their enemy cantering behind them until he had shepherded them into galloping at top speed. He then spurted suddenly in the most amazing manner into the middle of the flock and pulled down sheep after sheep with such wonderful speed and dexterity that there were five lying on the ground within a distance of thirty yards. His method was extraordinarily interesting. He came up on the right side of each sheep (thereby bearing out the theory that most carnivora are left-handed) and, seizing the galloping sheep behind the right ear, jerked its head downwards and inwards so that it pitched on its nose, the result being that it was stunned by the combined effect of the downward jerk and the impact of its own fall, almost or quite dislocating its neck. At the fifth sheep the wolf stopped and began to tear open its stomach, as he had done with the ram he had first pulled down. The shepherds then ran up and drove him off. I thought he would probably come back to the first ram, and ran to try and get a shot; but running at 14,000 feet above sea-level is difficult work, and I had to sit down about 200 yards from it just as the wolf arrived there. Before I could get my sights on him, he saw me, and immediately broke into a lope, whose pace was so deceptive that,

although I thought I had allowed almost more than enough in front of him, my bullet passed behind his tail, and he departed at a rate which made shooting with any chance of hitting a task beyond my powers. Of the six sheep which he had pulled down, the first ram was on its legs again, a piteous sight, its bowels dragging tumbled on the ground. Of the final batch of five only the last was dead, the other four all getting on their legs and staggering about dazed and giddy.

It seemed to me that I had seen the Tibetan wolf's usual way of securing a stock of meat. For, having stunned several beasts, he would then proceed to rip them open, and so prevent their going any further; then kill them at his leisure and have a supply which would keep an indefinite length of time in the cold air of that altitude and in the absence of vultures and other thieves, which would render such a method unprofitable in other parts of India. I do not say that this is necessarily so, but is merely a theory which seems the only possible explanation of the wolf's method in this particular case.

An interesting instance of the adaptation of an animal's breeding habits to the local climate in districts quite close to one another is shown by the red jungle fowl in Burma. In the lower Salween Valley you will find the chicks hatched out by the first week in April and finding their food under the thick carpet of dead leaves; thus they are well advanced and able to withstand the terrific downpour of the monsoon in May. In the dry zone of Burma, however, conditions are reversed. There the jungle is not so heavy and the dead leaves not so thick; while the monsoon is reduced to a season of heavy but helpful showers, with but rarely a few consecutive hours of rain. These conditions foster the birth of a crowded insect life lasting

till the dry season returns again. In such districts the jungle fowl do not hatch out till the rains are well begun, and I have found incomplete clutches in late July. Thus a continuous supply of food is easily obtainable by the chicks, and they are able to fend for themselves when the season of scarcity returns, and they must scatter over a wider area to search for food.

Another, in fact I might say " the other ", common game bird of the Burma jungles is the silver pheasant or " yit " ; for the Chinese francolin sticks to the more open slopes and bush country of the foot-hills, while peafowl are very local.

Both jungle fowl and " yit " (as the Burmans call the silver pheasant) are snared in large numbers by tethering a tame cock bird of the species on top of some small mound in the jungle and surrounding him with horse-hair nooses. The tame bird then challenges the wild, who comes to do battle and is treacherously snared. Some of the decoy birds are extraordinarily successful and seem to take a delight in enticing their wild brethren to destruction ; such birds are greatly valued by the Burmans, and occasionally change hands for sums of money up to sixty or seventy rupees apiece. One " yit " was shown to me in the Papun district which had been the principal agent in the catching of twenty-two of its species in a fortnight.

Burmans are wonderfully persevering in the pursuit of small beasts for food ; the digging out of a bamboo rat or the pursuit of one of the big monitor lizards keeping them happily employed for hours. Occasionally you will see a couple of Burmans working the mud-flats surrounding a half-dried pond, one of them armed with a spade, the other with a thin iron rod. This last the operator will thrust into the mud at intervals, and, on his getting the required " feel " at the end of it, his

companion will dig there and eventually excavate a muddy lump which, on being washed, turns out to be a murrel. These fish are in the habit of aestivating in the mud and are excellent eating.

It always seems to me that we miss a lot of good things by our conservatism in the matter of what we eat. Strange fruits and vegetables we are fairly ready to try, but it is very hard to induce the average Briton to taste anything novel in the way of meat. Yet many unfamiliar animals are most excellent eating. Monkey and porcupine I can personally vouch for, and the big monitor lizards are closely akin to the iguana, and probably just as savoury food as that South American delicacy. We eagerly devour snipe, yet despise many shore birds such as the black godwit and curlew, whose mode of life is more cleanly and which are just as good on the table. Very few birds can compare with a roast bittern in January; yet, when stationed in Peshawar, in the vicinity of which cantonment they are comparatively common, I found very few sportsmen who did not pass them by in ignorance of their culinary virtues. One of the best eating birds in the East is the bustard of every species, but there is a curious superstition in connection with them which I have come across both in India and Somaliland. At certain seasons of the year the bustard tribe feed largely on the Cantharides beetle, and it is said that the man partaking of the flesh of their legs at that period will become impotent. Why the poison should be contained in their legs only, or whether there are any grounds whatever for the superstition, I have failed to discover.

The houbara has very curious means of defence which is usually to be seen in action when hawking them in Northern India. When the hawk is close to them, they drop to the ground and squat. Then on his

coming within range they eject a sticky fluid (almost like birdlime) all over him, half blinding him and so glueing his feathers together as to render the hawk incapable of proper flight. The houbara then rises in the air again and continues on its way rejoicing, while the hawker rides up and finds a bedraggled object looking like a badly made feather duster, sitting in impotent rage on the ground. The wary experienced hawk will draw the houbara's fire by feints, and then the latter's supply of birdlime becomes exhausted and the hawk goes in and finishes him.

One of the most thoroughly equipped animals for both attack and defence that I have come across was a large black ant, three-quarters of an inch long, which was common in Somaliland. This insect was of stout build, with very hard black casing, and carried an immense pair of nippers in front, with which he could inflict a most severe bite. In addition he used to emit, when irritated, an appalling odour, by reason of which he is generally known as the "corpse" ant. It used to be very amusing to see a couple of British officers earnestly engaged in inducing a "corpse" ant to quit their tent by guiding him gently with bits of twig so as to avoid the fetid result of annoying him.

To return to hawks. I sometimes used to ride down a hare on the Arori Plain in Somaliland, keeping on him till I killed him by striking him on the head with the short handle of a camel whip which I swung by the leather thong, or else he squatted so dead-beat that I could jump off my pony and pick him up. Twice when I had an exhausted hare in front of me, an eagle swooped down and made repeated attempts to deprive me of the fruits of the chase. Once I only succeeded in rescuing my dinner by riding over the pirate, actually hitting him with my whip as he rose under the pony's nose.

The Arori Plain was a great place for secretary birds, which used to give a weird display when killing a snake or lizard ; banging their prey with their wings, stamping on it violently, and giving one the impression at a distance that one was watching an unusually energetic war-dance by a Red Indian brave.

The hammer-head storks, other queer denizens of the country, were wont to build a huge thatched nest of sticks in the top of some moderate-sized tree. There was one in the top of a dead " guda " thorn tree close to one of my shooting camps, and watching the owners enter it was a source of unending interest. The nest was at least five feet in diameter and the eaves overhung the tunnel-like entrance which sloped up towards the centre. To enter this the bird would fly clumsily round two or three times until sufficient speed had been obtained ; then, approaching the entrance, it would suddenly close its wings and shoot up into it, the whole performance looking rather like a wind-blown umbrella suddenly collapsing and bolting up a rabbit hole.

A most impressive flying performance is often given by choughs in Baltistan in the spring. A small flock (of a dozen to fifteen as a rule) will circle up into the sky with loud ringing cries until they are mere specks against the blue. Then one after the other, in rapid succession, they close their wings and drop like plummets at a dizzy speed till within a few feet of destruction on the rocks, then spread their wings again and sail up to perch happily together on the hill-side. This performance is gone through several times during the day, the object apparently being to show off their flying powers by as near an approach to destruction as possible.

A very delicate operation in the flying line is sometimes to be seen at the south end of the Tsokr Chumr lake in Ladakh. Here there are some broken rocky

cliffs in which the Brahminy ducks (or ruddy sheldrake) breed in large numbers. When the young are hatched, the parents (or perhaps the female only) have to carry the young down to the lake. This they do by tucking them in between the neck and shoulder, and it is very interesting to watch an old duck start with short wing-strokes and then do a long vol-plane down to the shore, occasionally cocking her head round to see to the safety of her youngster. These ducks are sometimes found far from water, and I once walked into a brood of fluffy ducklings of this species on the Kiangchu Plain, which is waterless except for a couple of small springs. These Brahminy, usually so wary in India, were much more confiding than the bar-headed geese which breed at the south end of the Tso Moriri lake. There I vainly tried in August 1911 to obtain a tender gosling for dinner, but found them much too alert.

There is a Kiangchu or "wild horse water" here also, but it belies its name, for I saw no kiang there, but only a beautiful red fox, which I came on while he was rolling in the sand of a dry watercourse. I was without a gun, so I was unable to secure him for the British Museum and have never yet been able to identify his species. The other Kiangchu, forty miles to the north-east, lived up to its name with a vengeance. There, on the occasion of my first stalk after Tibetan gazelle in 1905, I was unfortunate enough to attract the attention of one of those inquisitive nuisances known as kiang in the local vernacular and by other more expressive names to the sportsmen who have endured their vagaries. On this occasion the first individual, having conducted an independent investigation, then went off and fetched two of his friends to enjoy the sight of an angry man trying to hide behind a stone five sizes too small. Others came up too and brought their pals, till

finally I had seventeen of them kicking up their heels and playing at circus behind me, so that the gazelle I was stalking gathered that there was something amiss and departed over the horizon. These coffin-headed brutes, half horse, half donkey, turn up and show off their beautiful trotting action (their only virtue amongst innumerable vices) in all sorts of out-of-the-way places, and generally manage to arrive at the very moment best calculated to spoil a stalk. I had one or two stalks spoiled by wild asses in Somaliland, but they were not nearly so numerous as the kiang is in Ladakh, of which latter I once collected twenty-three by the simple expedient of lying on the ground and waving my handkerchief, there being but one solitary specimen in sight when I began. I am glad to say that I never lost my temper quite so badly as to shoot one, as did one sportsman of my acquaintance with a Somali wild ass. At that time these animals were on the "protected" list, and when asked by the authorities for an explanation of his crime, my friend stated that he had done it in self-defence, as the animal had kicked him !

SHIKARIS

For most men the personality of the native hunter of big game has a curious fascination. Even those who never quit the comforts of civilisation evince a curiosity about the shikari's mode of life which they would try and satisfy by questioning him, when met on the door-step of some ardent devotee of the great sport, but are baffled by not knowing how to begin or on what lines to direct the inquiry; so turn away reluctantly from a fascinating semi-mystery.

To those of us who hunt with them and have them as partners in the great game for months together, they are, in addition to being more often than not good comrades of the chase, an inexhaustible store of strange tales, superstition and native lore, which makes many an hour pass cheerfully; such as would otherwise be merely a tedious part of a weary wait for beasts to come out to feed, or a dismal bivouac in inclement weather.

Almost the first shikari with whom I hunted regularly was Bakshi; a little, weather-beaten Mussulman of the Jhelum Salt Range. Of low caste (for he was a *kamin* or village servant), he and his brothers had become shikaris by accident and instinct, and not through heritage. Two of Bakshi's brothers had been hanged for murder, the weapons being axes; a fact of which he was inordinately proud. For, although murder is common enough in the Salt Range, it is usually

confined to the higher class, hot-blooded *zemindars* or landowners ; few *kamins* rising to such heights of manliness and notoriety.

His remaining brothers, Madhu and Meru, were respectively long and gaunt, and short and thickset. They always used to accompany us, but, although knowledgable as to likely places for game, they had not Bakshi's uncanny instinct for the most probable destination of a herd, or even a particular ram, which had changed its feeding ground.

Nor had they his skill in tracking, which once kept us on the line of a wounded ram which had passed right through a large herd of sheep, although the blood trail had failed a good mile back.

Bakshi first taught me how to track, and showed me how to pick out the neat round-toed, blunt-heeled print of a good oorial ram, from the sharper split-pointed track of a tame ram, or the narrow, round-heeled one of a ewe.

I have seen Bakshi carry a trail for half a mile along a stony ridge, an occasional pebble kicked from its bed his only guide ; then through a flock of a hundred sheep, and up a little gully to where my ram lay dying under a kikar tree. Like all shikaris he was full of tales and superstitions, but the fauna of the Salt Range is very limited in number of species, and his yarns were mainly of passion and murder, and other sahibs who had come to shoot, and how Bakshi alone was responsible for their good results ; while the sahibs, and they alone, were responsible for the stalks which went wrong and the shots which were missed. But this is a habit not of shikaris only, while Bakshi was fertile in excuses when things did not go as he had predicted or a head turned out smaller than had been hoped.

One old oorial ram we were after gave a lot of trouble,

PUNJAB MUSSULMAN OF MURREE HILLS WITH GOURAL HEADS.

A RAJPUT SHIKARI.

To face page 184.

and two or three times had vanished mysteriously without giving a chance of a shot. The cunning old beast was always alone and easily distinguishable by a dark patch on one side. After our third futile stalk Bakshi declared that the ram was a devil. "Did he not vanish off the hill-side right before Hidayat Khan, whom we left to watch him?" he cried. The said Hidayat Khan having probably gone comfortably to sleep while we were making our way round to the back of the ridge on which the ram was feeding. However, the ram was doomed. For one evening I was settling down to bivouac just at dusk, and dislodged some stones which bounced down into the nullah below and, crashing through the bushes, dislodged the old ram from his unsuspected hiding-place. He cantered up the opposite slope, but the rifle was at hand and, at his first stop, a bullet sent him rolling down the hill again. When we reached him it was evident that the ram was not nearly as big as we had thought; for the horns only measured about 26 inches, in spite of forming almost a complete circle, while in body he was only about 29 inches at the shoulder instead of the usual 32. "He is smaller than we thought, Bakshi," I said. "Did I not say he was a devil? He had already begun to vanish and would have disappeared altogether if you had not killed him." It takes a quick wit to cope with a tongue like Bakshi's.

Bakshi is dead these ten years, but another fluent liar still lives. His name is Rupah and he is a Hindu of Kishtwar in Eastern Kashmir. A fine shikari and climber, with whom I have accounted for many tahr and bear, he lives principally in my memory for one extraordinary yarn. We were marching back to Srinagar and had halted to rest in the shade above the bridge over the Wardwan River. I remarked to Rupah that it was very hot. "It was on such a day in August",

he said, "that I rested above the bridge, and the heat was bursting the wild pomegranates like gun-shots. I heard a noise like many carts on a stony road, and looked up to see a great snake coming down from the Brama Peaks opposite. He was as big as three elephants about the middle, and when he drank of the river the boulders began to show dry in midstream before he finished. Then he turned, swallowed three cows, and went back to the upper mountains." To this outrageous tale I merely remarked, "That was a very big snake, Rupah." "Yes, Sahib. He was as far from end to end as the distance at which you shot that goural yesterday": some 180 yards.

"Did you never see it again?" "No. Perhaps the cow's horns killed it. For my wife's cousin went to visit a friend in the Pir Panjal Hills, and there he saw a snake which had died from eating a markhor; for the horns had pierced its side. But that was quite a small snake."

Some grating element of doubt must have crept into my comment that it must have been a big snake to swallow a markhor; for Rupah's rejoinder was the nasty remark: "No, Sahib, it was no longer than the range at which you missed that bear at Chiche." A most unkind cut, for the bear was going hard through bushes, and was the only thing I had missed that trip, even though it had been only forty yards away.

Rupah was one of the finest climbers I have known, and unbeatable as a shikari after tahr, which are lovers of bad ground. He took me (as related elsewhere) into a nullah never before visited by a white man, and supposed to be inaccessible; while in the four trips on which he accompanied me he never failed to show me game, and good heads too. Yet, as a Hindu, he was perhaps less easy to know and not as good company as

a Mussulman, Buddhist or jungle barbarian. There is something about the Hindu religion which seems to preclude the companionship arrived at by us with men of other religions or no religion at all; perhaps it is innate aversion for the cow-eating white man.

As good a climber as Rupah and a real companion was Awal Shah, with whom I have hunted straight-horned markhor in the hills of Kohat on three widely separated trips. Small, spare and clad in dingy thread-bare garments, he knows all the likely places for an old buck in the broken sandstone cliffs which tower above his village. The rock is rotten and the ground so steep that it is even worse than tahr ground; and the mountains of Astor and Haramosh, where I have hunted the bigger race of markhor with wide-spiralled horns, is a paradise compared with Awal Shah's glare-stricken hills.

In Astor the cliffs are flanked with birch and hazel, pine and cedar, while there are steep meadows of grass and flowers, with wild strawberries and raspberries in such profusion that in August a man may gather several pounds of either in an hour. In the other country there are scrub thorns, spear-grass and burrs, a blazing sun and glaring white cliffs; while the streams in the valleys are so tainted with alum that the taste roughens the mouth, cocoa is impossible to make, and a lather for shaving an unsolved problem.

It is also a favourite haunt of outlaws, who rob and kill with little discrimination, so that the villagers lead a hard life with man and nature both at war with them.

They are consequently pretty hardy, and Awal Shah is one of the hardiest. I say "is" because I saw him in 1926, and he seemed even fitter than when I had last seen him fifteen years before, or another five years before that.

On this last occasion I had only been permitted to go to the range, accompanied by an escort of Frontier Constabulary, as outlaws were known to be about. In fact the head constable, a lean, hook-nosed tough who had been "in at the death" of twenty-nine outlaws, seemed to be far keener on our hunting outlaws than markhor.

I had shot one indifferent buck, but could not find a really good head, so sent to the other side of the range for Awal Shah. He was away from home and arrived on the last day of my leave, meeting me on the very crest of the highest ridge. We exchanged greetings and sat down. Awal Shah looked me all over and said, "Sahib, you are much bigger and heavier; I do not think you can climb as well as you used to." Statement and inference both had to be admitted.

"And", he continued, "you go about with many guards. I think you have become a great man." I denied this hotly, and explained the guards; but it was not until Awal Shah had accompanied me down the cliff to my bivouac that he kindly expressed the opinion that I was still able to walk on a hill-side without falling down, and then he settled down to a talk with my bearer and my orderly, both of whom had done a lot of shooting trips with me.

The result was evidently favourable to me and I was restored to grace, for while I was writing in my diary after dinner, a figure slid into the circle of lamplight and Awal Shah sat down beside me. I waited a little.

"Sahib."

"Yes, Awal Shah."

"Last time you came there were outlaws in the hills, but you did not bring an escort to sit on every ridge-top and frighten all the markhor away."

"I brought no escort, and I came round by Malla

Khel, and so avoided the Deputy Commissioner's sowars who were sent to stop me," was my unguarded reply.

"Yes, and we killed a markhor and an oorial before they found you, and you had to go back."

The purport was evident, and, after sitting a little while longer in silence, Awal Shah went away to sleep.

In the early morning we parted, as my bivouac went down the hills towards Bannu, and he went back over the range to his mud-walled home.

"Come again soon, Sahib, there are still two big bucks near Shin Ghar. Come the way you came before. *Stare ma she*, Sahib."

"*Khwar ma she*, Awal Shah."

The plains this time, and a proud Rajput on the edge of the Bikanir Desert. Ranjit Singh had served in the Indian Cavalry and hated walking, so that all our hunting was conducted on camel back and I only dismounted for the last short stalk, while Ranjit Singh rode on at a walk leading my camel, so keeping the attention of the blackbuck or gazelle which I was stalking. I had been shooting very well, and in a week had killed six gazelle and five blackbuck with a single shot each. This was the last morning and an exceptional head had attracted me; but the shot was a few inches too high, and I had to fire a second to finish the buck. Ranjit Singh looked down at the dead buck, and I remarked that it was really a good head.

"He should have been killed with one shot," was all the answer I got.

We strapped the buck on one of the camels and made towards the railway. A couple of miles on I saw a bustard in a field of gram, and jumping off my camel, broke his wing as he ran, half concealed, through the crops some seventy yards away.

Now I was quite proud of this feat, yet when I sent Ranjit Singh to fetch the bird while I held the camels, and he returned, having had to run about twenty-five yards to secure it, he said in an aggrieved voice: "Sahib, you are not shooting well to-day; I have had to run a long way." What reply is possible to hypercriticism of this sort?

But it is the shikaris of the forest who hold the imagination. Their lives are spent in close intimacy with the jungle and its inhabitants; more often in constant warfare with the deer and pig which ravage their crops, the sneaking goat-stealing panther or the cattle-slaying tiger. In some parts they are pestered by that temperamental, high-strung, wise and powerful fool, the elephant; and find it hard to compete with the ravages of this wasteful, destructive feeder. Where there is plenty of food for all, as in Burma, man and the jungle folk live in a state of comparative mutual tolerance, and shikaris are few and hard to find. In the Central Provinces there is a constant feud between man and beast, and jungle villages are often hard put to it by crop raiders from the forest, so that the village shikari has been evolved and is usually a good man at his job.

In some parts the tables have been turned, and the village shikari, bribed by the hide-merchant, and supplied by him with gun and ammunition, drives a thriving trade in skins and trophies, until he so reduces the numbers of sambhar and other deer that the tigers of his district cannot find sufficient game to eat, and take to living entirely on cattle; then sometimes on man.

These village shikaris vary greatly in talent. Some can never rise above waiting by forest pool or footpath for a shot at some unfortunate beast; often in the dark

and with an inefficient weapon which, like as not, sends the wounded quarry off to die in lingering agony in the depths of the thickest undergrowth. Others belong to aboriginal tribes who, having lived for centuries in such close contact with the larger beasts, though they own no weapon and do not hunt for their own purposes, will yet lead a white man along a trail invisible to his eyes, with such skill that he at last begins to doubt whether there is any real trail at all, until suddenly the little Gond or Bhil points with the handle of his axe, and, just as the white man has with great difficulty made out a few inches of hide amongst the leaves, away crashes the bison bull which they have been tracking for the last two hours or more. The shikaris grunt, utter a few pithy, and fortunately unintelligible, remarks about the clumsy purblind white man, who can neither see nor shoot a beast when brought up within a few yards of it in the open ; the white man says " Damn " and the party returns mournfully to camp.

Good trackers are most fascinating to watch. They usually work in pairs, and while the trail is clear they seem to walk along with scarcely a glance at it. Then the leading man will check, peer at the ground in front and to both sides, and probably stand stork-like on one leg, meditatively scratching his calf with the big toe of the other foot. A low grunt, and one has seen a bruised blade of grass, or a leaf turned wrong side up. A consultation and more careful casting forward. Then surer signs are found, the tracks are conspicuous once again, and on we go.

There are plenty of frauds among shikaris, however, and none are worse than the man who knows a little about tracking and will never admit he is wrong. Sometimes it will take days of futile effort to detect a

fraud, and on easy ground and immediately after rain a success may be obtainable which will make it more difficult to deal with the incompetent tracker when the real test of hard ground or thick undergrowth is met with.

The greatest fraud of all, as a class, is the Kashmiri. He is, as a rule, a good organiser and runs a camp very well. He is often well informed as to shooting grounds, but it is when he gets there that he fails. He is often a poor climber and indifferent stalker, wanting in endurance of hardship and consequently a lover of villages, with no desire to penetrate to the remoter haunts of game ; while he bullies and cheats the unfortunate villager to an extent which renders the advent of a sahib so unpopular that no one will show game or furnish supplies. Actually he is nearly always dependent on the local village shikari for a sight of good heads and the way to reach them. Withal he is a plausible rascal with a ready flow of flattery, and a master of every method by which an extra rupee may be extracted from the sahib ; while his attitude of sorrowful resignation and surprise at the stinginess of his reward when grossly overpaid at the end of a trip, makes one long to take a good running kick at him. However, even among Kashmiris there are a few fit to rank with that widespread polyglot fraternity whose individuals welcome one back to the shooting grounds with wide smiles and make one certain of days, if not always rewarded by record trophies, at least well spent in that cheerful effort and test of human faculties which we term the " sport " of big-game shooting.

THE END