



SPORTSMAN'S MISCELLANY

by

Arthur de Carle Sowerby.



A Sportsman's Miscellany



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Frontispiece.

Photo by K. T. McCoy, Esq.

Roe Deer in the wilds.

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A Sportsman's Miscellany. By Arthur de Carle Sowerby

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With sketches by the Author and photographs.



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To
My Brother
Captain Edward Seguiet Sowerby, R.A.M.C., M.B., B.S., Lond.,
who is now serving with His Majesty's forces in France,
this book is affectionately dedicated.
1917.

PREFACE.

This book has been written for sportsmen and nature lovers. It is not intended to be a contribution to science, though care has always been taken to make it as accurate as possible. Where scientific names occur they can be relied upon, if not as those adopted by the most up to date Zoologists, at least as being sound and of common use.

The book originally appeared in the form of articles in the "China Illustrated Weekly," and the "Peking and Tientsin Times," which articles have been carefully revised and in some places slightly altered or added to.

The author's sincere thanks are due to Mr. J. D. de La Touche for assistance in the determination and classification of some of the birds that are mentioned, and to Messrs. K. T. McCoy, and H. E. Gibson, Dr. P. H. Atwood and others for the use of photographs, though many of those illustrating the book were taken by the author himself.

A. de C. S.

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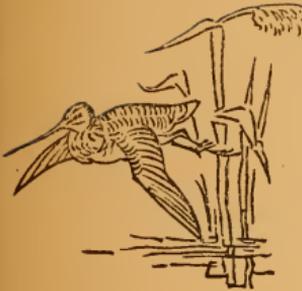
CHAPTER I.

THE AUTUMN SNIPE SEASON.

The snipe is hardly ever found
In woods; he's fond of open ground,
The rusby pond, the quiet brook;
But chiefly to the marshes look;
The plashy heath and boggy moor
Yield frequently an ample store.
Stick to them well when this the case is,
They very quickly change their places.
To-day the sportsman can pursue
The numerous game till all is blue;
To-morrow he goes out again,
But mayn't a single shot obtain.
Affected by the wind and weather,
They often flock away together;
Sometimes they to the hills repair,
Rising in wisps all wildly there:
Vain the pursuit; but if a gale
Should quickly from the east prevail,
Or even from the boisterous north,
Again you ought to sally forth.

—Watt.

THE AUTUMN SNIPE SEASON.



THE snipe are in! What that means to many of us Tientsinites who pride ourselves on being sportsmen is difficult to convey to the man who cares not for such things. That gentle thrill which stirs the soul when, chancing along the edge of some sedge-lined pool or swampy flat, one sees the first snipe of the season rise with its familiar, warning chirp and after zigzagging over the reeds for a short distance mount high into air, circle in a wide sweep and then drop like a stone into some friendly cover must be felt to be appreciated. Visions of guns

and dogs, house-boats and lunch-baskets, glorious autumnal days in the open and the return to a well-earned supper and bed in the after glow of the evening sun crowd in upon the mind. Back one goes to one's shooting friends; gear is overhauled; plans are made; and over the glass that cheers and through the blue haze from pipe and cigar reminiscences and tales of prowess in the field pass till it is time for the night cap.

Well, as I have already said, the snipe are in. Some few of the luckless ones who have not been able to get away to the seaside for their holiday have already taken their toll of the fat birds, which have come straight down from their breeding grounds in the far north. Sandy and Charlie, one hears, have already had their fifteen couple apiece of a Saturday afternoon, while less renowned shots have picked up their five or six couple.

The summer rains which have spoilt so many a week-end outing this year have laid a shimmering surface-water of six good inches over wide stretches of land, that has been parched enough for the last two

seasons, and everything augurs well for a treat for sporting men this Autumn.

In but few parts of the world does snipe-shooting, as a sport, reach such a high pitch of excellence as in China. By that I do not mean that China boasts the finest snipe-shots, but that the shooting grounds are better and the birds more plentiful than in most places. Enormous bags are made on the Yang-tze and in the coastal provinces of the South and East; while on the flats of South Manchuria and in the marshes round Tientsin it is no uncommon thing for week-end shooting parties to return with forty to fifty couple per gun. Even in the inland provinces of Shansi, Shensi and Kansu, wherever marshes occur the seasons yield a plentiful supply of good fat snipe to the passing traveller.

I propose, however, to deal more especially with the autumn season in the environs of Tientsin, and if I become somewhat personal, well! what would you? First-hand accounts are always better than those compiled from hearsay.

As everyone knows, or should know, Tientsin is situated on the Pei Ho just below its junction with the Grand Canal, the Ta-ching Ho and other water-ways that drain the great plain of Chihli. When the rains in the mountains of the north and west are heavy, these rivers bring down vast volumes of water and the only opening to the sea being inadequate to carry them away they flood large tracts of land. Thus are formed extensive marshes, which are intersected in every direction by ditches and small canals. As during the Autumn the water slowly recedes it leaves behind it just the right kind of feeding grounds for snipe. Hence the enormous numbers of birds that occur.

Tientsin lies right in the path of a bi-annual migration between the Yang-tze and South China on the one hand and Manchuria and the breeding grounds of East Siberia on the other. The marshes are just what they want wherein to find rest and food and many of them appear to loiter about as long as good warm weather lasts, moving off when rains and low temperatures prevail. The best sniping grounds occur where the soil is in the form of oozy mud, covered with

an inch or so of water. If there is low cover in the way of reeds or sedge so much the better. As the season progresses some of these spots are left high and dry and are in consequence avoided by the snipe, while others become just right and attract the incoming birds. Thus a spot that was excellent last week is no good this and the sportsman will do well to choose his ground carefully and so avoid wasting a lot of time. Some men do not like tracking through the soft clinging mud, preferring to seek their sport on dry ground, overgrown with grass and the red weed peculiar to this plain. Sometimes they will find the birds extremely plentiful, for there can be no doubt that snipe frequently resort to dry land to rest, especially if they are being disturbed much by gun-fire in the wet patches.

Standing *kaoliang* and tall reeds where there is the requisite amount of water are favourite resorts of snipe, but the shooting is tiresome and one loses a lot of birds.

So much for the grounds: now for the birds themselves. According to the best authorities there are some seven species of snipe known to occur in China. Of these but three are at all common in the environs of Tientsin. These are the common or winter snipe (*Gallinago calestis* Frenzel) the pintail snipe (*Gallinago stenura* Bonaparte) and Swinhoe's snipe (*Gallinago megala* Swinhoe). The others are Latham's snipe (*Gallinago australis* Latham), which breeds in Japan and only passes along the South-eastern coast of China, the solitary snipe (*Gallinago solitaria* Hodgson), which frequents mountain valleys in the interior even through the winter months, and is only a straggler in these parts, the jack snipe (*Gallinago gallinula* L.) a little fellow that is not at all common here, though plentiful enough in the British Isles, and the painted snipe (*Rhynchea capensis* L.), which can hardly be considered a true snipe and offers but poor sport.

As I have described these elsewhere I do not propose to take up space with them here, except to say that they may easily be recognized by the differences in their tail feathers thus:—

The common snipe.	total number 14.	all large.
The pintail snipe.	total number 26.	10 large, 16 small.
Swinhoe's snipe.	total number 20.	8 large, 2 medium, 10 small.

- The solitary snipe. total number 20. 8 large, 2 medium, 10 small.
(The whole bird much larger than Swinhoe's
snipe with greyer, more barred plumage.
- Latham's snipe. Total number 18. 14 large, 4 narrow.
- The jack snipe. Very small, with short beak, $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches.
- The painted snipe. Curved bill, large spotted wings, rich colours and
markings.

The occurrence of most of these vary with the year and the season, but the common or winter snipe is the most regular in habits and far and away the most plentiful.

This species is the first to appear in spring, arriving from the south about the end of March. It continues to be the most plentiful through the thick of the season till May, when it begins to give place to the pintail and Swinhoe's snipe. Very early in Autumn it appears again, its numbers steadily increasing through September and early October, when it suddenly vanishes at the approach of cold weather.

The pintail and Swinhoe's snipe are about of equal occurrence. They appear late in April or May, are sometimes very plentiful about the end of the latter month, and go north in June. I have found the pintail very common in June in open clearings and along stream beds in the forest regions of Manchuria. On the Sungari River, in North Manchuria, I found Swinhoe's snipe in great numbers in July. Apparently they breed on the flats of that country. A good deal of interest may be had by keeping records of the dates, numbers, and different kinds of snipe that go to make up one's bags. This season a friend showed me a bag of six snipe, shot a few days ago (Aug. 26th) which contained two Swinhoe's, two pintail, one solitary and one common snipe. The same sportsman bagged no fewer than six painted snipe earlier in the month.

The wanderings of birds during their migrations is a subject of intense interest. Think of the enormous distances they cover, and in how short a time they do these journeys. They are with us right up to the end of May, then off they go to the Arctic regions, mate, brood, rear their young, and are back again in August. This does not give them much time for travel, when it is taken into consideration



The pintail snipe (*Gallinago stenura* Bon.), Swinhoe's snipe (*Gallinago megala* Swin.) and the common snipe (*Gallinago caelestis* Frenzel).



Collapsible Canvas Boat.

that some twenty days is required for incubation, and at least a fortnight for the young to grow up.

Another interesting study is the path taken by these migrants. What governs their choice of route? Surely it must depend to a large extent on the food supply. For instance this year the snipe grounds round Pei-tai Ho, where visitors to the seaside usually make good bags in August, have been very disappointing, the reason undoubtedly being the dryness with which that locality has been affected and the consequent lack of luscious worms so dear to the snipe. A gentleman on receiving this explanation asked me how the snipe knew that the place was dry and so avoided it. In thinking this over it seems to me that the snipe did not know before hand, but on arrival soon discovered that they were in a dry area, and so passed on at once for lack of food.

This is undoubtedly what has been happening round Tientsin for the last two seasons. Who is responsible has been a burning question, but the fact remains that the water has been drained off the land, and the snipe have in consequence been woefully few. Some local sportsmen in order to remedy this, have suggested to a certain well-known person in authority that he might give orders to turn a bit of the Pei Ho on to the plain. It would have been an excellent idea, but impracticable, I fear, for the river itself has had the appearance of a mud ditch. The real trouble I fancy has lain a few hundred miles inland, where in the mountains of Shansi and West Chihli the lack of snow and rain has caused the rivers to run low.

Some three years ago, the Autumn season round Tientsin was a very good one, and many of us can look back with a good deal of pleasure to it. I remember keeping tally of the bags made by some of my shooting friends and myself with very pleasing results. This is the sort of thing that appeared in my diary.

Sept. 6th Went out with N. and W. this p.m. for snipe.

Had an hour's good shooting near Japanese Barracks.

Bag:—N. 12 head.

W. 10 ..

S. 11 ..

Total 33 head, of which 2 were Swinhoe's and 2 pintail,
the rest common snipe.

Sept. 11th Self 10 snipe. 1 pintail.

Sept. 13th W. 11 snipe.

S. 8 „

—
Total 19 „ all common. Evening shoot.

Sept. 20th W. 9 snipe.

S. 20 „

—
Total 29 „ all common. Afternoon shoot.

These evening walks abroad continued right into October, and we always met other devotees of the sport, generally with good bags.

The whole of the plain was more or less flooded and I used to go out in a little collapsible canvas boat, which I found very useful in getting from one good spot to another.

As an example of the sort of sport it was, take the following. It was a lovely evening towards the end of September and with my little son, who has already developed an inordinate love for any kind of animals alive or dead, and who always wants to go with Daddy to shoot birds, I rowed along one of the canals to a favourite spot near the race-course. As the nose of my boat touched the soft mud of the bank two snipe rose and skimmed away over the rushes. Out I got and walked along getting a couple of birds almost at once. The reeds were rather thick so several birds got away without my firing at them, but a clear patch yielded three more. Then I hurried back to the boat lest the youngster had got into mischief. He was perfectly happy catching frogs and grass-hoppers, so off I went again and finding a wide patch, fairly clear of tall reeds, where the water was just right, had a splendid half hour. Bird after bird got up and I was able to bag a couple of dozen before the light got too bad for shooting. Several birds were lost in the reeds, a penalty of shooting without a dog. Alas! Jimmy, my old pointer, had gone the way of all flesh early that year.

Three other sportsmen had come upon the same patch while I was there and their guns, popping merrily to right and left, told of the excellent sport they were having. The outing ended for me with the satisfactory bag of thirty birds. The other three men had respectable

bags as well. Son had his pockets full of creepy, crawly things, so we pulled home in the dusk as happy as two schoolboys.

Such bags as the above are common enough, however, and nothing to make a song about. When it comes to thirty couple, then one is beginning to get into good snipe figures. It has been extremely difficult to get hold of really authentic notes of the sizes of bags made round Tientsin. There are plenty of good sports who lay claim to having made large bags, and far be it from me to doubt their words, but—well native snipe-shooters tell tales of having sold the results of their day's labour to this and that disappointed sportsman. The following bags, however, have been culled from the diaries of old hands, who have been careful to get witnesses, so that they may be considered unimpeachable.

The largest authentic bag made by one man in these parts appears to be that of Major Picton, which was 88 couple. This was made in the spring of 1905 at Ching-liang-chêng.

Next to this comes a bag made by Mr. R. P. Sanderson when out shooting in the Autumn of 1907 with the late Mr. W. W. Gyett, when he bagged a round hundred birds (50 couple).

Some thirty years ago the late William Forbes, founder of Forbes & Co., and James Stewart, Sr., of this port bagged something over 300 birds in one day in the old French Marsh. Another good bag was made about nine years ago by Messrs. D. F. A. Wallace and R. Bandinel, who secured some 60 couple between them one morning in the direction of Sheng-feng.

Mr. P. A. Travers-Smith once bagged 63 snipe in four hours, during the whole of which time it was raining, a most unusual circumstance under which to secure so good a bag. This was at T'ai-t'ou.

A lot of other good bags must have been made in these parts, which have never been put on record.

Of course the local natives, shooting for the market, make very large bags, but it is impossible to get any records of these.

The best bag it has ever been my luck—for there is a deal of luck in making a good bag of snipe—to pile up was on a trip up to Sheng-feng with my wife, Sonny and the brothers W—. It was a great outing

and will always remain in my memory. We had a motor-boat, a steam launch and a house boat, lots of grub and good fellowship. Of course the "Snipies" were there and promised great things.

We buzzed away from Tientsin one fine afternoon with the motor-boat and house-boat in tow, and before night had come very near to our objective. As luck would have it, rain began to pour that night, and the rapid draining away of the marsh water which had been going on of late, had made it unsafe to navigate in the dark, so we hauled to near Kao-chuang-tze till daylight, when we abandoned the launch and started up the canal towards Sheng-feng. By eight o'clock we had reached likely looking ground, and so got out and did a bit of shooting. Birds were not too plentiful owing to the rain the night before, but we got enough to wet our appetites. It was the following day, however, that we really got the sport. By breakfast time we had piled up a dozen couple each, and then sat around smoking for an hour, while the "Snipy" took my wife out to try her luck. It was with huge delight that we watched the proceedings. We heard a few shots and climbing on to the roof of the house-boat descried "Snipy" pointing along the ground to where he had seen a snipe settle. At last his pupil spotted the bird, raised her gun and fired. There was a double report, a scatter of shot and the lady sat down plump in the soft mud, while a little black dot, the snipe, went skimming away with derisive chirps.

After that we joined in the fray and for three hours our guns popped away. I never saw such numbers of snipe: they were everywhere, and the only trouble was that the going was bad. One of my companions found a piece of hard ground on which the snipe kept settling and he rapidly increased his bag to large proportions. For my part I had much ado to keep my end up. I had some German cartridges that were altogether too strong and soon gave me a bad "gun-finger" added to which the kick brought up a lump on my jaw. The result was I found myself shutting my eyes every time I pulled, so that I missed a lot of birds. However, by noon, when we met again at the boats and compared notes we were able to tot up the respectable bag of one hundred and seventy birds of which eighty-five belonged to the gun of the elder of my companions, and seventy to mine,

the rest falling to the younger brother, who, let it be known, was out for the first time, and was shooting left-handed with a right-handed gun.

Where to go for one's snipe is always a burning question at this time of year and you will find devotees asking one another for tips. The old hands, as a rule, keep their own counsel and go their ways with a boon companion or so.

Sooner or later, however, their favourite spots will be discovered by younger enthusiasts and then good-bye to their peaceful evening shoots. They have to go further afield and are lucky if they can find grounds that suit them.

I shall not be giving anything away if I mention a few useful spots within easy reach of the town. Hai-kuan-ssu has always proved a profitable starting point for me. Boats can be had, and canals leading west and south will take the man who is content with his half-dozen couple to very nice little spots. Sometimes, when there is plenty of water about, good shooting may be had in the vicinity of the rifle butts towards the East Arsenal. For really big bags week end trips in house-boat or motor-launch are necessary and a general north-westerly direction may be taken.

One of the charms of snipe shooting is that there is always the chance of the birds coming in in extraordinary numbers and giving one the time of one's life. There is a story, and with this I must close, of a certain convivial party, who left the club in the "wee sma' hours" and went for a stroll ere turning in. Dawn was just tinging the eastern sky when he found himself on the ground that used to be the French pond. How far he was hazed it is impossible to say, but he swears that the snipe were settling round him literally in thousands, while their cries filled the air. What a chance for an early riser!!



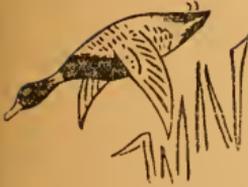
CHAPTER II.

DUCK FLIGHTING.

Sportsman! lead on, when through the reedy bank,
The insinuating water, filter'd, strays
In many a winding maze. The wild-duck there
Gluts on the fattening ooze, or steals the spawn
Of teeming shoals—her more delicious feast.

—*Somerville.*

DUCK FLIGHTING.



OW that the duck season is rapidly approaching, a few remarks upon the subject of duck shooting may not prove out of place.

Wild-ducks, as everybody who has tried shooting them knows, are amongst the shyest and most unapproachable of birds. It is only a thorough knowledge of their habits and ways, combined with much patience and good luck that will enable the sportsman to secure a decent bag of these much-to-be-desired members of the feathered world.

The ways of circumventing the wily duck to his downfall are various. One may walk him up if the country be suitable with the right sort of ditches and cover, or one may stalk him, so to speak, in specially constructed punts or canoes. Decoys may be used and many a good bag has been made by this means, but the most exciting and perhaps the most sporting way is what is commonly known as "fighting" or "fight-shooting."

This particular form of sport is one which most local shooting men have had ample opportunity of experiencing. It owes its existence to the fact that all wild-ducks and teal have a habit of changing their ground at certain times every morning and evening. It matters not where they are, or where they have been all day, when the right moment comes they commence these flights, always in the same direction, over the same route to the same spot. The reason for this is that, in country like that round Tientsin, the ducks feed at night, spending the day either in making their long migratory flights or else in resting and sleeping well out of harm's way in the middle of some wide expanse of open water or bare mud flat.

Their food consists of certain kinds of water-weed that only grow in particular, somewhat limited areas, and it is in passing to and from these spots that the birds always use the same routes.

This would not help the sportsman much, were it not for the fact that the ducks at these times fly low, and so offer a good chance to the man who is quick with his eyes and gun to bring them down.

Fortunately for the ducks themselves their period of fighting is very short, or rather that part which occurs in daylight, for in certain places the flight seems to go on most of the night. During the twenty minutes or half hour that the morning and evening flights are on, if the spot be a good one, the birds come in in such numbers that the man who has been clever enough to discover their exact line of flight may indulge in sport of the very best, keeping his gun hot and retrievers, whether they be coolies or spaniels, busy. I have known them come in so fast that one's gun became too hot to hold, by reason of the rapidity of one's fire.

In the morning the flight takes place just as day is breaking, when the ducks leave their feeding grounds, and is over soon after sunrise; that is to say virtually over, for stray couples may fly back and forth till noon, when the heat forces them to seek rest and the cool of open water. In the evening the flight does not begin till daylight has nearly gone and continues until it is too dark to see. It is perfectly wonderful how absolutely one can depend on these flights taking place day after day as regularly and punctually as though timed by a watch.

As I have said already, most of our local sportsmen have had plenty of opportunities of going in for duck-fighting. This makes one feel a certain amount of diffidence about recounting one's personal experiences in this line, knowing full well that many of one's readers can tell of far bigger bags and better sport.

However, I cannot refrain from giving the following account of a trip, made specially with the object of getting some good duck-fighting. Not only will it serve to show, to those who have never indulged in it, what the sport may be, but it gives me the chance of paying off a few old scores.



Photo by H. March, Esq.

A day's bag near Tientsin.



Fine goose country in Shansi.

Three of us, Harold, whose ruddy and cheerful face is well known on the China coast, Geordie, an "unspeakable Scot," though I fear anything but a silent one, and myself, about whom the less said the better, left Tientsin for a likely spot down the river—which, by the way, I have been strictly enjoined not to give away—in a borrowed motor-boat. I am not going to give too many details of our cruise down stream, nor would I care to repeat the horrid things we said about motor-boats, their owners and particularly their engines. Suffice it to say that after an hours easy run we found ourselves drifting helplessly with the current in the pouring rain, while Harold, our expert engineer, vainly tinkered with the motor of the wretched boat we were in. The beastly thing had evidently decided, in that annoying way motors, camels and Chinese coolies have, to take a days rest, and no amount of petting would induce it to resume duty. Neither would swearing or hammering, for that matter, have the slightest effect.

We ultimately reached our destination at ten o'clock that night in the pouring rain, after having discarded the motor-boat and travelled by river steamer and sampan, thereby missing the evening flight of ducks which we had so fondly anticipated enjoying.

The last we saw of the motor-boat she was lying in the middle of the river, while a fellow sportsman, who was on his way back from a shoot, and who had nobly offered to tow our derelict back to Tientsin, was trying vainly to get her hitched up to the stern of his own boat, whose rudder was badly bent owing to an accident earlier in the day.

Having landed, we had the cheerful job of pitching our tent in the rain ere we could have supper and get to bed. At last it was managed, grim faces relaxed and the edge vanished from tired voices as the boy produced copious plates of hot broth and ham and eggs.

During the course of a somewhat chequered career I have known many camps, but none stand out more clearly in my mind's eye than this one. The sluggish waters of the creek gurgled by not ten yards away. From across the flat came the plaintive calls of water-fowl, and at times the unmistakable whistling or duck's wings passed over head. In the lurid glare of an acetylene lamp, Geordie's pride, we lay back on the sweet smelling

reeds that we had spread on the floor of the tent, and told yarns, smoked, or strained our vocal chords in attempts to discourse sweet music.

By three o'clock we were astir, after a few hours broken sleep, and having had a cup of hot coffee each, set out for the grounds where Geordie knew of a good spot. An hour later we had reached it, after having stumbled through the dark, risking life and limb amid the intricacies of a network of canals and ditches, to the accompaniment of choice expletives as shins were barked or gun-barrels choked with mud.

It was one of those chilly mornings, with a hint of frost in the air, when a fellow yearns for his extra half hour in bed and feels anything but poetic. Away in the east across the placid waters of the marsh the sky was just the least bit tinged with pink, and against it the tall reeds stood black and ragged. The morning star shone with wonderful lustre, heralding the approach of day. Everything—reeds, star, the pink flush of dawn and a whisp of purple cloud—was faithfully reproduced in the glass-like water below.

The loud quacking of ducks and the plaintive calls of curlews and other shore birds were wafted to us on the chill morning air as we took up our positions along a narrow path that ran across the marsh, cutting it in two, and there, hidden by the reeds, we waited for the flight to begin.

Geordie, who had promised us the best of sport, was in a flutter of anxiety lest we should have failed to choose the best spots, and could not help telling us so. I could hear muttered grumblings from the reeds on my left, as Harold expressed a wish for silence, which was cheerfully disregarded by the irrepressible Geordie. For my part I was harrassed with doubts as to the likelihood of the ducks' coming our way at all and busied myself thinking of the caustic things I should say on the way back to camp. In short two of us, at least, were in anything but pleasant moods.

Suddenly, without the slightest warning, there was a whistling of wings, a few black dots passed over head, a gun was fired and we heard a thud. Harold had bagged the first bird. Next moment a small flock came right over my head and I let drive, right and left. One bird

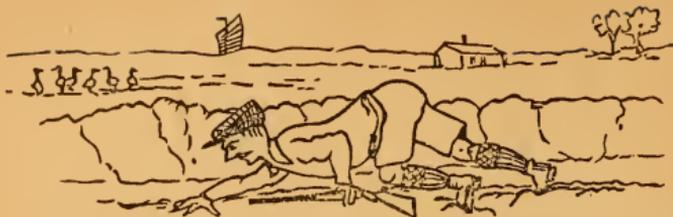
dropped a few yards from me, while another, obviously hard hit, planed away to the reeds on the far side of the marsh. Then for ten minutes it was hot work: the full flight was on. We had no time to mark our birds properly, but had to let them lie where they fell, while we attended to those that came hurtling through the air.

At last the sun came up, a red ball of flame, and the flocks of ducks became fewer and fewer, finally ceasing altogether. We set to work gathering in our bag. Besides the one that dropped near me, and which I had secured at once, I had four birds in the reeds to my right. To my disappointment and annoyance I could find only one, though I beat through the reeds a dozen times. The others fared no better. Altogether we gathered in six ducks, the rest, some eight or ten birds, being lost.

There was nothing for it but to go back to camp, for a duck in the reeds is harder to find than the proverbial needle in the haystack.

The rest of the day, except when we were eating or sleeping, was spent wandering over the dryer parts looking for hares and quail. Five of the latter were bagged. A hare that was put up caused some little excitement by running the gauntlet of our united fire, but was finally brought to bag.

Some wild-geese feeding on the paddy-fields tempted us into foolishness. We decided to stalk them. As there were three of us, each eager for a shot, and each with a coolie tagging on behind, the stalk was almost foredoomed to failure. We crept along a canal bank, which led past the feeding and seemingly unsuspecting birds. I was in the lead, and every few yards took a careful peep to see if the birds were all right. Presently I noticed that they were all on the alert, with heads up and their long necks stretched to the full. They had spotted something. Looking back along our line I was tickled to see one of my companions plodding along, his head and shoulders well down, but his stern high in the air. This it was that the geese had spotted. Up they got, beautifully out of range, while, hot and disappointed, we sat ourselves upon convenient sheaves of reeds and indulged in mutual recriminations.



Finally we decided it was all the fault of one of the coolies, an officious sort of fellow, so we cheered ourselves with thoughts of revenge when it came to pay time.

By five o'clock we were back at the fighting grounds, all excitement at the prospect of the evening flight, which is always better than the morning one. There was the usual strained politeness as each offered the other the best spot; but at last we were settled and waiting.

As in the morning, so now. The ducks appeared without any warning. Suddenly out of the grey sky flock after flock came skimming on whistling wings, right over our heads. They were mostly teal, mallard, Swinhoe's ducks and pintails, with an occasional pochard or speckled teal. In his excitement Geordie forgot the golden rule of silence and called out to know how we were getting on.

"Shut up you silly mug" growled Harold, Bang!! went his gun and down came a fine fat pintail hitting Geordie square on the head.

"Well you needn't shy them at me," came an injured voice from the smother of reeds, at which, in spite of our bottled wrath we had to laugh.

And so it went on. This time we marked the fallen birds more carefully, retrieving them whenever there was a lull. We felt it better to let chances slip by than to lose the birds we had actually brought down. In spite of these precautions we lost a few. One duck, a pochard, that Harold shot, dropped out upon the mud flat where it lay seemingly done for. When, however, I went to get it, it was gone. After a careful look to make sure, I was just about to return to the cover of the reeds, when, by the merest chance I caught sight of its bright

eye. There was a dried spray of grass and stuff sticking up in the mud, and the duck had crouched under this, and by the breaking up of its outline had become invisible.

We ended up with another eight birds, a poor enough bag considering the number about, but a lot of time had been wasted looking for those that fell into the reeds. As it was we left several until next morning, while at least seven were never found. This brought our bag up to fourteen duck and teal, besides which we had a few quail and a hare.

The second morning's shoot was a failure: by some mischance, a hankering for the warmth of our beds, I think, we arrived too late, and the flight was over. There was no time for any more shooting, as my companions had to get back to work, so we struck camp, took sanpan to Tongku, where we caught the mail train for Tientsin

One does not always find it so easy to shoot ducks in this way. I have recollections of sitting two successive evenings with a companion behind a dyke in the Chinking district, when the ducks came in with such speed that they had passed us before we could even spot them. We would hear the familiar whistling of their wings, a swish as they passed, and then would see them away out of range in the other direction.

Sometimes flights occur in unexpected places, and are due to some unusual circumstance of wind or weather. One sportsman of my acquaintance tells of a spring afternoon when he had been out snipe shooting, and was walking home along a dyke beyond the racecourse. Suddenly one of those big dust storms came on, and with it flight after flight of duck. My friend had only a handful of cartridges left, but by choosing his birds carefully he bagged six, all of which he retrieved, as the place was bare of reeds.

Talking about bags, it would be interesting to know what are the largest that have been made in these parts. The best one I know of was made by R. Bandinel and Dare Wallace in the autumn of 1907. This was on a week-end shoot and they got 174 ducks. This record bag for these parts was made in the vicinity of Ti-li-fu. The following year the same two sportsmen made a week-end bag of 90 ducks and in 1909 one of 70 odd.

Sportsmen here seem to think that the day for large bags round Tientsin is over. This is not certain, though it seems very likely with the way the country has been drained the last year or so.

In a certain sense shooting ducks over decoys might be called flight-shooting, for the birds are taken as they circle round, having spotted the decoys. It is remarkable how a few rough-hewn bits of wood will attract the ducks and a pretty sight it is to see. Away off in the distance one sees, as one sits hidden in the reeds, a familiar row of dots travelling at a great speed. Presently the dots swerve, grow larger as they approach and almost before one is ready they have turned into ducks and are in range. How they tower into the air as one fires, or swerve to right or left with loud quacks of terror!

Very large bags can be made this way, for one can keep at it all day. A good comfortable seat in the reeds, with open water in front and behind so that the ducks may readily be retrieved and a dozen or so decoys is all that is needed.



Decoys can be made out of tin, by simply cutting out the silhouette of a duck and fastening it to a small board, (see figure above) and painting the required colour. A hinge may be made at the junction of the tin silhouette and the floating-board, so set that by folding down the former the whole may be easily packed and carried.

I have always found my little canvas boat very useful for getting about after ducks, and can recommend the model to those who think of getting some such thing. It has the advantage of folding up into a parcel which a coolie can easily carry.

For those who contemplate duck shooting this autumn I should recommend taking a southerly direction from the Japanese barracks, or week end trips in the direction of Ti-li-fu. Nothing much is to be had closer than a day's house-boat or saunpa journey.

CHAPTER III.

A BEAR HUNT.

Up from his stony playground—down from his well-digged lair—
Out on the naked ridges ran Adam-zad the Bear;
Groaning, grunting, and roaring, heavy with stolen meals,
Two long marches to northward, and I was at his heels!

—*Kipling.*

A BEAR HUNT.



OR many years it was my ambition to shoot a bear, and not only to shoot one, but, in keeping with the best traditions of the "wild and woolly west," to eat one, or rather parts of one. Doubtless if the truth were known I am not the only one of the brotherhood of the gun in North China who has had these boyish dreams and hankerings for bear meat. How I realized my ambitions and got a bear, and how my taste for bear meat was thereafter completely cured, the following yarn will tell.

The particular bear hunt in my mind took place in the Manchurian forest in the autumn of 1914, when after a long tramp from the town of I-mien-po, famous, by the way, for its beer, some Russian hunters, an old snipe shooter from Tientsin and myself found ourselves in ideal bear country.

We put up at the log cabin of a little Taoist hermit, who had come to enjoy the simple life 'mid the eternal solitudes of the forest, living upon the proceeds from a small clearing that he had made and tending to the needs of a particular spirit or geni that occupied a cave in an adjoining spur of rock.

The forest that surrounded his humble cabin and clearing was wonderful in its blaze of autumnal colours, while rich harvests of acorns lay upon the ground and with the heavily laden tangles of wild grapes offered feeding grounds that were certain to have attracted the bears from far and near.

This the hunters knew when they brought me to the spot, for it had long been famous for its bear and wild pigs. One of them, indeed, said he had never failed to get either one or the other whenever he had visited the place.

A couple of days were spent hunting through the surrounding country, with some success, as the skin of a fine grizzly bear, stretched out to dry in front of the cabin, testified. On our way to carry in the remains of this animal—for your Russian loves his bear meat, and will pay a good 5 kopecks a pound for it—we had to work round the base of the high spur of rock that rose a thousand feet above the surrounding country.

Presently the excitement of little Damitchka, a sharp-eared brindled bitch, who was the brain of the nondescript pack we had scraped together, just as old Rasboi was the leader when it came to a fight, made us pause on the side of a steep slope and await developments. The shooting of the grizzly and the fight the great brute put up, had keyed me up to such a pitch of excitement, that I had great difficulty in preserving a calm exterior. My knees I know were shaking as I watched the dogs working the thick cover below us.

“There it is, there it is!”

“Where?”

“Quick! down in the bushes below that rock.”

Bang! Bang! Yap yap yap, gr-r-r, yap yap!! A large she bear had broken cover and pandemonium seemed to have been let loose. The tall aisles of the pine-forest rang with the yelps of the pack. Naribia and Filatoff, my two Russian companions, were in an agony of excitement lest I should fail to see the shaggy black form scampering through the brush below us. They discharged their rifles somewhat recklessly. Dogs and bear seemed to be in a mix-up, so that in shooting thus they were running considerable risk of hitting one of our precious pack. For my part I preferred to wait till the bear took to a tree or came into the open. The dogs could be trusted not to let her escape.

I could dimly make out old Rasboi, scarred veteran of the chase, hanging on to the bear's hind quarters, while Damitchka, Mishka and Djuke danced about in front of the infuriated animal, dodging the vicious blows of her “steel-shod paw.”

Suddenly—bears always act suddenly—with a deep-throated, coughing roar the bear charged through the yelping mob and with

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The end of the hunt.



Log cabin and bear skin out to dry. Manchuria.

extraordinary speed tore through the underbrush. She actually out-distanced the dogs as she circled round the head of a shallow ravine and burst into full view on the side opposite us, where the deep carpet of pine needles kept away any undergrowth. Now was our chance and, needless to say, we were not slow in taking advantage of it. Our rifles rang out in rapid succession, but the bear kept on in her headlong flight. She was losing ground, however, her burst of speed apparently being too severe a strain to keep up in her present fat condition, and the dogs, from whom a veritable torrent of yelps and shrieks poured forth, were rapidly closing in on her.

At last a bullet struck her and she staggered. The next shot rolled her over down the slope at the very moment that Rasboi and Damitchka, like two furry demons, closed with her. Mishka and Djuke piled in on top perfectly crazy to get a hold. There was an indescribable smother of black, white, yellow and brindle and a babel of whimpering yelps and choking snarls and coughs. Down into the scrub they went to the bottom of the ravine, while the two Russians and I hurried to be in at the death.

We had some difficult underbrush to worry through and when we finally reached the scene of the last struggle all was quiet. The bear, a large, thick-coated female, lay stretched out dead. The dogs lay round in various positions, their long tongues out and their flanks heaving in short sharp gasps. Rasboi lay close to the bear's stern watching the tail, ready if the brute showed any sign of life to get his favourite hold. Damitchka got up and came a step or two towards us, her lips drawn back in an unmistakable grin, as much as to say, "There you are; there's your bear."

The bear measured sixty-two inches from the tip of her nose to the end of her short stubby tail and weighed between three and four hundred pounds. She was rolling with fat and had a fine sleek coat. She was a typical Manchurian black bear, and made a fine specimen for my museum.

Needless to say I was pleased enough with the day's work, though, on account of the bullets that hit the bear having gone clean

through her without hitting any bones, we could not tell which of us had fired the fatal shot.

Well, here was my bear meat. The grizzly had proved too tough and strongly flavoured, so I was glad to get the opportunity of trying the real thing, as the Russians assured me the flesh of this second bear would prove.

We skinned the carcase and carried it piecemeal to the cabin, where a huge stew was made. I regret to say that I could not eat the flesh, it was too strong and greasy, but the broth, with mushrooms, of which the surrounding woods were full, chillies and potatoes boiled in it, was just the thing after a strenuous day's work.

The Manchurian black bear is a handsome animal with its pure black coat, long, sleek and shiny, and the white crescent-shaped patch on the chest. The tip of the chin also is white. The hair on the side of the head and neck is much longer than on other parts of the body, which gives the animal a fine mane. The largest males will scale some six or seven hundred pounds, though this is unusual.

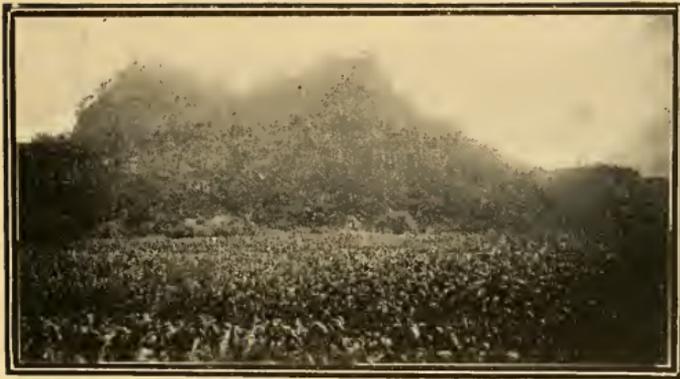
In habits it is much the same as other bears, though living as it does in the heavy forests it is not always easy to hunt. It is inordinately fond of Indian corn and frequently raids the maize-fields planted by the settlers in straggling, isolated clearings. Sometimes this bear will even leave the shelter of the forest and come out on to the plains after the corn which it loves so much.

Like most of its kind this species hibernates, and it is during the long period of seclusion, while the severe Manchurian winter holds sway, that the young are born, generally two in a litter.

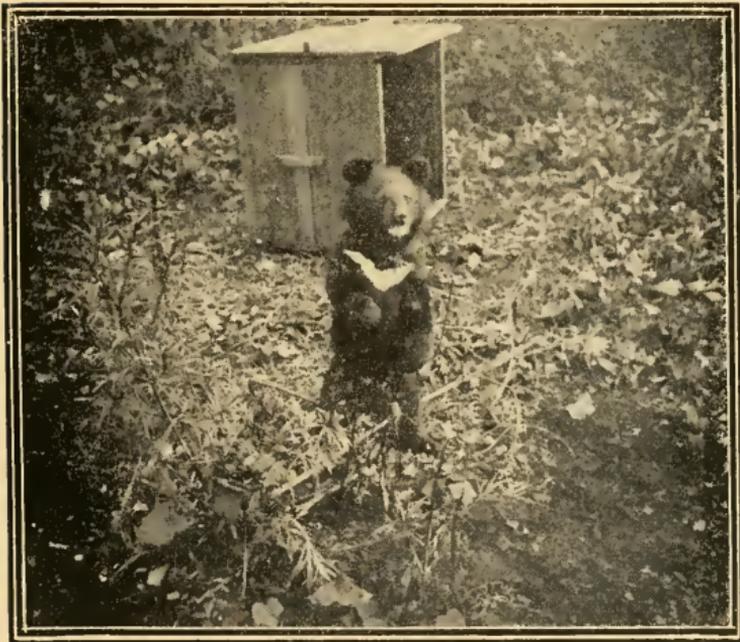
The species was described by Père Heude under the name of *Ursus ussuricus*. Previously it had been thought to be identical with the Himalayan black bear (*U. torquatus* Blan.)

Besides the black bear there is a brown bear (*U. manchuricus* Heude) and the grizzly (*U. cavifrons* Heude) in Manchuria, either of which may be met with in the forests of the north and west.

The hunting in Manchuria is very good, as bears are plentiful in certain parts. Good bear country exists round I-mien-po, on the Harbin-Vladivostok section of the Chinese Eastern Railway,



Maize-field, Manchurian forest country.



A Young Manchurian Black Bear

which place may be reached in three to four days from Tientsin. Local hunters may be engaged, who will guide the sportsman to the best spots. The country along the upper reaches of the Yalu River is also good for bear, though it takes longer to reach from Tientsin.





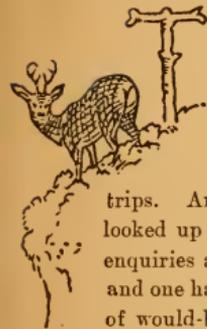
CHAPTER IV.

A SHOOTING TRIP IN THE IMPERIAL
HUNTING GROUNDS.

Who hath smelt wood-smoke at twilight? Who hath heard the
birch-log burning?
Who is quick to read the noises of the night?
Let him follow with the others, for the Young Men's feet are
turning
To the camps of proved desire and known delight!

—*Kipling.*

A SHOOTING TRIP IN THE IMPERIAL HUNTING GROUNDS.



THE Chinese New Year holidays were at hand, and, as is usual at this time of the year, the sportsmen all up and down the China Coast were planning their annual excursions. On my desk was a small pile of letters from various parties asking advice as to where to go, or suggesting shooting trips. Amongst one's friends in this town various spots were being looked up on the map; various schemes were under discussion. Anxious enquiries as to the chances of sport in this and that locality were afloat, and one had much ado to keep from being carried away by the enthusiasm of would-be big game hunters, and from telling them one and all one's best places for their shooting.

Three of us, a well known Tientsinite, my brother, who was just out from home, and so was new to it all, and myself, had, in that casual way that shooting men have, as they pass the time of day in the Club on an evening, fixed up for a trip somewhere. The question was where? a much more important thing, you will admit, than the half-nodded "How about it?" and answering "O. K. old man, puttee book," which so often determines for good or ill one's companions on a shooting excursion. The trouble was we only had three weeks to spare which put many of the best hunting grounds out of reach.

It was a real inspiration when somebody suggested the Imperial Hunting Grounds, which lie from 90 to 100 miles north of Tientsin. As none of us had ever been there before, there was the additional charm and interest of doing a little exploring on our own, so that it was decided forthwith that the Imperial Hunting Grounds should be chosen.

Thus it was that early in the morning one fine day in the beginning of February, the three of us, mounted and equipped for cold

weather, found ourselves leaving the outskirts of Tung-chow, the farthest point we could reach by rail.

A wide plain lay before us, and my two companions and I rode steadily east by north across its yellow bareness. Cold from the north a bitter wind came whistling. Nowhere was there a blade of grass or even the green of winter-wheat. Such trees as there were stood stark and brown. A pale sun had just appeared above the horizon, but seemed at first only to intensify the cold. Our ponies were jogging along easily at the pace so natural to your China pony that eats up the weary miles.

Our cart laden with the usual truck followed at its slow crawl over the dusty roads. As often happens under such circumstances we, who rode ahead, took the wrong turning. All the morning we rode, wondering where our party had got to, and at noon making a meal at a wayside inn on dough-strings and fried Chinese cabbage. It was useless looking for our cart on that plain with its labyrinth of roads and cross roads; so, trusting to the sagacity of the servants to insist on reaching the destination decided upon before starting, we hurried on, reaching the place about mid-afternoon. By dusk there were no signs of cart or servants, so a coolie was despatched in search of them, while we stretched ourselves on a warm brick *kang* and slept. It was not till ten o'clock at night that the wretched contrivance turned up, and we were able only then to get our first proper meal since four in the morning. Then came bed and oblivion.

Next day we set out with pack mules—for we must leave the plain—and for two days we travelled laboriously over rough mountains by narrow bridle-paths. These were execrable. The mules also were a sorry lot of under-fed sore-backed animals. We were thus delayed each day, having to travel long after dark to reach our night's shelter.

Towards the end of the second day the bareness of the rugged and precipitous mountains which had steadily increased in size as we travelled, gave place to woods and thick scrub, showing more and more promise of good sport to come.

Platz 5.



The slopes on either side were covered with spruce and oak.

After crossing a steep pass where our pack animals nearly came to grief owing to ice and snow, we descended into a wide valley where there was no sign of cultivation. The slopes on either side were covered with spruce and oak while copses of elm, walnut and poplar, with thick masses of thorn-scrub and wild vine dotted the otherwise grassy valley-bottom.

We took up our quarters in a deserted military stockade, congratulating ourselves on the prospects of good sport on the morrow.

My little camp-stove was soon burning merrily, making us comfortable enough, as we sat round after our evening meal smoking the pipe of peace. Here we were right in the heart of the southern portion of the Imperial Hunting Grounds, and with such promising country all round us we had a right to feel content.

One of our party, the old Tientsinite, was keen on pheasant and other bird-shooting, always provided that there were no beastly hills to climb for them. You will find this aversion to hills very strong in those born and brought up on the flat. Even the Tientsin natives, snipies and the like, who have no nerves, can not stand hill-climbing: it turns them giddy at once.

My brother was an absolute novice at shooting, and so was prepared for anything, while I wanted big-game and some of the rarer birds inhabiting the mountains that loomed up on all sides and whose snowy tops could be seen glistening in the moonlight through the ventilation holes in the paper window.

Bright and early next morning we were abroad, having decided to drive the valley for birds. Alas! pheasants, that is to say the common ring-necked pheasants—*Phasianus torquatus* or *kiangsuensis* or whatever they like to call it, were far from plentiful, and, when found, were wild and difficult to get. Thus the bird-shot of the party had hard work in piling up a bag of fifteen birds or so during the ten days of our stay, while the novice and I soon gave up trying for them, and devoted our time to deer and goral in the mountains.

To our delight we found the beautiful Reeve's pheasant comparatively plentiful, and I was fortunate enough to bring one of these

magnificent birds down. It measured five feet tip to tip. These birds inhabited the oak-covered lower slopes; but they usually got up at impossible ranges, and at awkward moments, while their swift flight through the trees made them most difficult targets. Somehow none of the party succeeded in getting another, though I winged a couple one day. These escaped by means of their tremendous speed on the ground.

On the third day the novice and I decided to climb a high and precipitous range to the south of our camp in search of gorals, or wild goats, as we often call them locally. After some very strenuous climbing we were nearing the top of a rugged spur of rock, when two fine gorals suddenly broke cover.

Neither of us were prepared for this, and, in any case, were too blown for a steady aim. So the gorals escaped, though a long shot or two were tried.

Having watched them out of sight, as they jumped from rock to rock, or dodged quickly through the naked tree trunks of the pine-covered slopes, we continued our climb, arriving at the crest a few minutes later. We found ourselves looking over perpendicular cliffs. Far, far below lay a thick wood of oak covering the lower slopes, which were formed by the debris of countless ages of crumbings and rock-falls from the frowning walls above. Beyond lay an open valley and a stream, only partially frozen, which shone and glistened in the sunlight.

Suddenly, as we were standing taking in this beautiful scene, while recovering our breath, there was a rush and clatter of falling stones, and a large male goral broke cover from within a few feet of us. It went straight down that frightful precipice, and, gaining the shelter of the oak-woods below, escaped without offering so much as a chance of a shot.

This was disappointing, but we decided to follow the ridge in the hope of putting up another of the elusive animals, for the cliffs seemed full of them.

We had not gone far when a koklass, or pucras pheasant, broke cover and went off on thundering wings. This was the first time I had seen one of these birds in its natural haunts, so I gave up my rifle to



The cover in places was extremely thick and high.



The haunts of the goral and koklass.

the bearer, and, with my shot-gun, went in pursuit. I got several shots, but unfortunately failed to bring down a single bird. I never came across birds harder to hit. They would shoot out from the rocks, skim along for a few yards, and then turn abruptly and vanish behind a spur, or else sweep outward, and dodge away between the pines. At last I gave it up as a bad job, and we continued along the ridge.

Bit by bit we worked along, beating every likely looking spot. Presently as we came out upon the brow of a deep chasm, we stood face to face with another goral, which was standing on a ledge twenty feet below us, looking up at us, head bent on one side, ears thrown forward with that inquiring look goats have. Even as I raised my rifle the agile creature jumped ten feet or more to an almost imperceptible ledge, while my shot rang out harmlessly.

Jump, jump, jump, down went the goat, zigzagging from ledge to ledge in a most bewildering way, while I very nearly lost my balance leaning over the precipice in my attempts to draw a bead on the animal. It got away as the others had done, and thoroughly disgusted we set out for camp, arriving at dusk, where, however, we were cheered by a good hot curry and a convivial cup of tea. Out came a copy of Kipling and the evening passed pleasantly enough with poetry, yarns and song.

Not to be outdone by the wily goats, we climbed the same peaks next day, and, after skirting the ridges, keeping a sharp lookout the while, I got a shot at a fast disappearing goral, which I was lucky enough to hit. There followed an exciting bit of tracking along hair-raising ledges, and short, grassy slopes, below which chasms, a thousand feet down, yawned hungrily. Finally we came up with the wounded animal standing at bay in a cleft of rock. It tried to charge, and, had it succeeded, would have sent me over the precipice, for my footing on the slippery grass was none too secure, and my back was not three feet from the edge. My bullet, however, dropped the animal ere it had gone two yards.

The following day we went in a different direction, putting up three handsome roebuck before we had gone far. However, they did not offer us a very good shot, making their escape across a series of steep ridges. We followed, hoping to get another shot. Sure enough, as we

were working through a pine wood, there was a noise on the opposite slope, and, looking up, we made out the three deer standing amid some scrub-oak. Away they went again, but this time in full view, and we opened fire. The whole lot vanished over the ridge, but one had stumbled at one of my shots, so we crossed the ravine to pick up their trails and see if any had been hit. Yes, there was the tell-tale blotch of blood, so we sat down and waited, knowing that the wounded deer would not go far if left alone. As a matter of fact it was just over the ridge, not fifty yards from where we sat, and when, after sufficient time had elapsed to allow the wound to stiffen, we crossed the ridge a quick shot, taken as the animal rose, stretched it dead.

In our wanderings we came across leopard and tiger tracks, but were not fortunate enough to put up one of these great cats.

The most interesting discovery of the trip, as far as I was concerned, was a new species of *Tamias* or tree-chipmunk, a lively little animal, never before recorded so far north. This was named *Tamias vestitus* by Dr. Miller of the Smithsonian Institution.

The local hare, of which but a single specimen was secured, as might be expected from its semi-forest environment, was of a very dark colour, though it apparently belongs to the same species (*Lepus swinhoei* Thos.) that occupies most of North China.

The whole country was strangely reminiscent of certain parts of Manchuria that I have visited, the chief difference being that the trees were smaller and the woods less thick. Bird life, considering the time of year, was wonderfully plentiful. In the woods we frequently saw the great black woodpecker, while jays were abundant. Waxwings, greenfinches, hawfinches, buntings, crossbills, pied-woodpeckers, both large and small, besides hawks and falcons were seen almost daily.

The jay of this district has been but recently described as new; indeed at the time of my visit it was unknown to science; though a description of the species by Mr. La Touche of Chin-wang Tao was shortly on its way to England. The bird was called *Garrulus diaphurus*, being a form intermediate between the Manchurian species *G. brandtii* and the Southern, Central and Western China species *G. sinensis*.



Goral shot by the author.



Thereafter we sat ourselves down on the sunny side of a bamboo grove and had lunch.

Sometimes, as we worked down the valleys, where the open streams of crystal-clear water wound between banks of tall grass and thick brush, we would put up a solitary snipe or two. These, of course, were eagerly potted, giving agreeable variety both to the shooting and to the menu. As dusk approached each night, the fierce boom of the great eagle-owl would ring out on the cold stillness of the winter air. There was abundant life on all sides, for the country was fertile and sheltered; but how different was this life from that of spring or summer!

Alas! how changed from the fair scene,
When birds sang out their mellow lay,
And winds were soft, and woods were green,
And the song ceased not with day.

All the beautiful songsters were wanting. The trees, with the exception of the pines and spruce, were bare and brown. No flowers lit up the mountain slopes, and even the mosses on the damp rocks of the ravines were dark and withered. Half nature was sleeping its winter sleep, and of the living things, the greater part seemed to be in search of blood.

When snow came we were able to read more clearly the life-stories of the wild things, and many a red tragedy lay revealed upon its virgin whiteness. Perhaps it was the scattered feathers of some small bird that had been devoured by a hawk, or perhaps the remains, tufts of white down-like fur, or a blood-stained paw of some luckless hare, that the eagle-owl had swooped upon in the dark hours of night.

It was a world of life, and of death in life, where the nature-lover and the sportsman might wander day by day, finding a thousand things of interest, never wearying of it.

From these scenes, however, we were at last forced to tear ourselves. The insistent call of duty made itself heard above the call of the wild. Two of our party proclaimed it necessary to return to town, so we regretfully packed up our gear, said goodbye to our delightful surroundings, and three days later boarded the train for Peking.

Four days' journey, that is all; and yet how many Tientsin sportsmen know of the existence of these beautiful hunting grounds, where tigers are to be seen if you are lucky enough, and leopards are positively plentiful; where the beautiful spotted deer and the gentle roe occur in herds; where the goral and the koklass inhabit the rocky cliffs, and the gorgeous Reeves, and the hardly less beautiful common ring-necked pheasants fill the oak-woods and scrub patches of the lower slopes and the wide, flat valleys.

Well, there it is, and those who think of visiting it had better waste no time, for it has been handed over to the farmer and the woodsman and the pot-hunter, the men that in a few short years will turn such wild places into smiling farmlands, beautiful enough, but gameless and useless alike to the naturalist and sportsman.



CHAPTER V.

THE YANG-TZE RIVER DEER.

The mist has left the mountain grey,
Springlets in the dawn are steaming,
Diamonds on the brake are gleaming;
And foresters have busy been,
To track the buck in thicket green;

• • • • •

—Scott.

THE YANG-TZE RIVER DEER.



THE little river-deer (*Hydropotes inermis* Sw.) of the Yang-tze is an animal unknown to North China, and one which few of our North China sportsmen have had an opportunity of shooting.

Not so with the members of the Shanghai shooting community. With them the slaying of a river-deer (frequently but erroneously called hog-deer) counts for no more than the potting of a hare does with us; while you will find a great many keen sportsmen speak of shooting one in terms little short of contempt.

The reasons usually given for this are three. In the first place the little animal is extremely abundant in many districts, in the second it is fairly easily killed with a charge of number four shot—Wade says eight—and lastly its flesh is not of a very high quality.

Thus the poor little fellow, as a sporting animal, ranks rather low in the list of Chinese game.

Still, you will find him figuring in most bags that are made in the Yang-tze valley, which goes to show that it is the rule to pot him when he offers a shot, and I have a strong suspicion, that, were the truth only known, more than one of the sportsmen who openly deprecate shooting this little deer, and who make apologies such as “I thought it was a hare” or “The little beggar made me so mad disturbing all the pheasants that I plugged it to get it out of the way,” whenever they do bring one home, have a sneaking fondness for him all the time, and, but for the feelings of their fellow sportsmen, would not mind half-a-dozen head figuring in their day’s bag.

Of course there are sportsmen, and to them be all honour for their humane feelings, who do not like shooting river-deer because of the

way the poor creatures cry when wounded and not killed outright. Those who have once heard that cry will never forget it, and, if they shoot at one of these little animals at all, will only do so when they are quite sure of killing it on the spot.

A lady and her husband, friends of mine, and, if I may use the term, true sportsmen, have sworn off deer shooting altogether, because they once had a pet river-deer, whose gentle disposition and charming ways won the hearts, not only of his human friends, but of the whole pack of sporting dogs of the establishment.

Going back to the purely sporting point of view, the chief reason against river-deer shooting as a sport is the ease with which the animal is killed. As I have already said, he easily succumbs to a dose of fours, but that is not the only trouble. He lies very close and so nearly always offers an easy mark, while there are times when he is found on the islands in the river after the reeds have been cut, when there is no possible chance of escape, and so is absolutely at the mercy of any one who has chanced along with a gun in his hand.

Another grave charge against the river-deer is that he upsets one's dogs so badly. Many a man has missed a good hour's shooting, and completely lost his temper into the bargain, thereby jeopardizing his accuracy of aim for the rest of the day, because some wretched deer has jumped up right in front of his pointer's nose, and that sorely tempted dog has broken all bounds of discipline by careering madly off into the brush, disturbing the coverts for his master, and earning a good thrashing for himself. The chances are that such an episode will cast a blight upon the whole day's shoot, so that one can really forgive the sportsman, who has experienced it, his hard feelings towards the cause of all his annoyance.

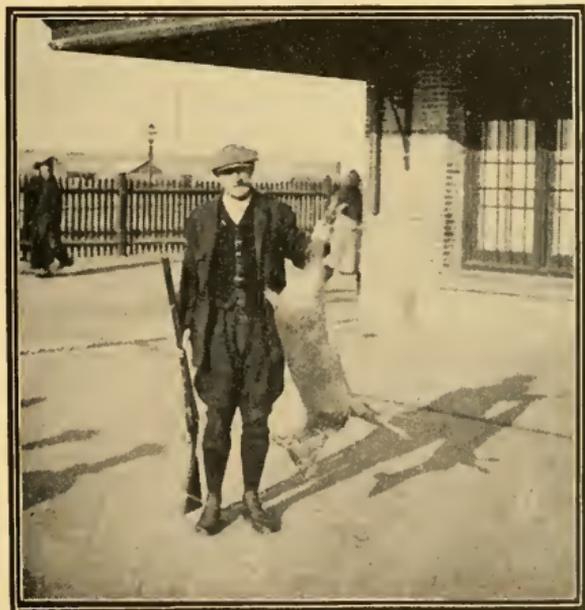
Add to the fact that the flesh of this deer lacks the quality and flavour of true venison, the other fact that he carries nothing in the way of trophies except his teeth, and you will find there is no very great reason for shooting him at all.

It may be said that any animal, bird or fish, the killing or taking of which is considered sport, must possess one or more of three



Photo by J. D. de La Touche, Esq.

The Yang-tze River-deer (*Hydropotes inermis* Sw.)



A nice Trophy.

characteristics. It must either be edible or it must be a menace to human beings in some way, or it must carry some useful or ornamental trophy in the shape of horns, tusks or pelt. This, of course, does not mean that if a thing possesses any of these qualifications it becomes a sporting animal. For instance one fails to see any sport in gathering clams or in swatting mosquitoes or in shooting egrettes.

Thus our little friend can never become a general favourite amongst shooting men; though, as I have already said, there is evidence to show that a good many sportsmen have a sneaking fondness for him and pot him accordingly. Especially, I think, does this apply to North China sportsmen, who can only visit the Yang-tze valley occasionally, and who seldom get anything bigger than a hare to pot at.

For the man who has not experienced the upsetting of his favourite dog, and the consequent spoiling of a day's sport, or who has not shot the little animal before, or who, like myself, considers a head with a couple of good teeth not too mean a trophy for his wall, there is a certain amount of good sport to be had out of the Yang-tze river-deer, especially if he chooses to shoot him with a light bore rifle instead of a shotgun.

I have known shooting parties from Tientsin, of which I am not ashamed to admit being a member, which deliberately went "gunning" for river-deer with beaters and all, as though it were the best of sports, nor can it be denied that they succeeded in having a very good time.

It was just a matter of selecting the right sort of cover and beating through it, the man nearest to any deer that was put up taking first shot. It was a funny thing that on these special beats for deer, we usually found the little animals much less plentiful than when we were out after pheasants, but that is always the way with game.

I well remember one of these battues, when six of us, armed with rifles, beat a long hill-side, after a fruitless day in search of wild pigs, to pot a certain river-deer that had been seen earlier in the day. The fusilade that broke out when the deer was driven from cover was like a battle, and to crown it all the quarry got clean away.

On another occasion I was out with my old friends R. K. and the Laird, with whom I have spent several Chinese New Year holidays

up country. We had been beating for pheasants with more or less success in the San-chieh country, north of Pukow. River-deer were not too plentiful, but we had put up one or two. It was my ambition to get a head for a trophy, as at that time I had not a representative of this particular deer in my collection.

So we decided to have a special drive for river-deer. Accordingly we called up our beaters and told them to lead the way to some spot where they could be sure of a *chang-tze*, as the natives call it.

After an hour's walking over the flat but grassy valley, we entered some low hills, and soon came to a likely looking ravine, where we spread out and commenced to beat.

The bottom of the ravine was occupied, as is the rule in that country, with a series of terraced paddy-fields, now bare, save for a few tufts of pale, yellow rice-stems. The sharply sloping sides were wooded with oak and other trees, interspersed with dense patches of feathery-topped bamboo. The under-brush was very thick, which made going difficult, but we pushed along till the excited barks of Bill, an aggressive terrier that belonged to the Laird, told us that something was afoot.

Luck was with me this time, for two deer suddenly broke cover, and, crossing the paddy-fields, offered me a shot. One of them rolled over as I pulled the trigger, and was immediately set upon by Bill, who very nearly tore the little animal to pieces before we could get to it. Finally his master pulled him off, half choked, his mouth full of hair, but yapping and slobbering to be at it again. It was his first blood, and one could hardly blame the poor dog, but my deer was very nearly ruined as a specimen.

Thereafter we sat ourselves down on the sunny side of a bamboo grove and had lunch, after which we continued the beat, but failing to put up another deer, decided to spend the rest of the day after birds. Finally we returned to camp, which happened to be the railway station, with a nice little bag of five or six brace of pheasants, several brace of quail, a duck or two and my deer, whose head now adorns my hall.

It is while beating for pig, as one sits or stands silhouetted against the sky-line on some steep slope, while the line of beaters sweeps the valleys and hills, that one sees most river-deer; and I call to mind with pleasure on one such occasion seeing an old Tientsinite bring one down with a fine shot from a 22 high-power savage rifle, as it was crossing a ridge at top speed at a range of some four to five hundred yards—a shot any one might be proud of.

The Yang-tze river-deer, or hornless river-deer, as he called it, was discovered by Swinhoe and described in the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London* (p. 89.) in 1870, under the scientific name of *Hydropotes inermis*.

It is a small deer, about the size of a half-grown sheep (25 lbs. in weight, according to Wade), characterized by the absence of horns. Its weapons of defence, or offence as the case may be, are two well developed tusks, which stick down from the upper jaw as in the musk-deer.

These occur only in the male. They are thicker, heavier and shorter than those of the musk, the shortness being due to the fact that they are kept well worn down by the deer's rooting habits.

In colour this deer is of a general yellowish-brown, darker on the top of the head and down the muzzle, and lighter on the under parts, on the inner surface of the ear and on the lips and chin. The tips of the ears are edged with black. There is no white croup-disc.

The hoofs are soft, rather blunt for a deer, and spread widely, which last characteristic enables the little animal to progress without sinking in the soft mud of the places it frequents. There is a short, stubby tail.

Wade says that its senses of hearing, sight and smell are not acutely developed, as in other deer. His reason for making this statement is that it allows the sportsman to get to such close quarters. This is not a sufficiently good reason for making such an assertion, for there are many animals with abnormally sharp sight, acute hearing and delicate sense of smell that depend more for their safety upon lying low

and hiding, than upon their swiftness, albeit they possess that swiftness to a remarkable degree. The common hare is one of these.

As a matter of fact the cover in which the river-deer hides is much too thick and tall to allow it to see its enemies at any great distance; while, as a race, it must have learnt, in the thickly populated part of China that it inhabits, that to break cover endangers its life far more than to allow the hunter to approach it closely, and possibly pass it by unnoticed.

That this deer is both sharp sighted and acute of hearing was proved to me one evening, when on topping a low ridge, I saw one feeding on the short green grass of an open valley some hundred and fifty yards away. It immediately assumed a listening attitude, and, on my raising my rifle, bounded away before I could draw a bead on it. It had evidently first heard me and then seen my action in raising my rifle. I have frequently done more than this in full view of a roedeer, the acuteness of whose hearing and sight are unquestioned, without disturbing the animal.

The favourite haunts of the river-deer are the reed-beds and patches of tall grass that fringe the river banks or cover the sides of streams and marshes in adjacent country.

It does not always keep to the damp places, for it may frequently be found in the scrub-covered hills, where, doubtless, it finds a safer and more secluded retreat than is afforded by the reed-beds during the reed-cutting and shooting seasons.

In the summer it will swim from the mainland to the islands in the river, where in the autumn it may often be discovered in great numbers. I know of one occasion when a party of sportsmen shot seven deer on one small island.

The female produces from two to seven young at a time, a prolificness not to be met with in any other species of deer.

The range of the river-deer coincides with the basin of the lower Yang-tze, extending as far north as the southern portion of Shantung, and southward at least as far as Hangchow in Chekiang province. It probably occurs a good deal further south than this.

Plate 9.



Native with River-deer.

Of the local spots (i.e. spots within easy reach of Shanghai) where this deer is most abundant, the sportsmen of Shanghai and the Yang-tze can speak better than I can, but I may say that I found it extremely plentiful in the hills that lie on the southern side of the Yang-tze from Chinkiang to Nanking; while there are, of course, places like Deer Island famous for the numbers of deer that occur there.

Great numbers of these deer are exported every year in cold storage, while the hides of a still greater number are sent out of the country. Its prolificness seems, however, to counteract the slaughter that takes place, so that the species is still plentiful enough.





CHAPTER VI.

DIRTY WEATHER.

Before a midnight breaks in storm,
Or herded sea in wrath,
Ye know what wavering gusts inform
The greater tempest's path;
Till the loosed wind
Drive all from mind,
Except Distress, which, so will prophets cry,
O'ercame them, houseless, from the unhinting sky.

—Kipling.

DIRTY WEATHER.



ONE of the chief things, for which the European residents (and I suppose the natives as well) in North China have to be thankful, is the wonderful climate that the country is blessed with. True, we have our dust storms in the spring, our occasional droughts in the early summer, our rainy season and then our winter blizzards; but on the whole the climate is hard

to beat, with the weeks and weeks of fine, clear sunshine. Perhaps in that Eden of the Western States, California, or in much vaunted New Zealand, or in some of the beauty spots of "Island Nights" fame in the South Seas one may enjoy a better climate than that of the northern provinces of old Cathay; but I doubt it, for where will you get the exhilaration of our magnificent winter months?

Particularly is the sportsman of this country blessed by this superb climate. It is seldom that one hears of an up-country trip being spoilt by the weather, yet alas! such things do happen, and, though one hates to have to record it, one must admit it is not always that the shooting man, whose heritage is the marsh and fen, forest, field and flood, mountain and valley, and all the beauty and life of wild nature, enjoys the glorious outing he seeks.

Sometimes the storm clouds gather after he has made arrangements for his week-end, or even after he has actually set out. The sky becomes dull and threatening. Hoping against hope that it will clear he continues on his way, either by houseboat, sanpan, cart, pack-mule or pony, according to where he is going and what game he is after.

Alas! the inevitable follows. First a spot or two, and then the downpour, at times even followed by three or four days' or possibly a week's dirty weather, when it means either sticking to the boat or whatever shelter he may find, or else a continuous soaking. In any case the results must be poor enough, for there can be no doubt that the majority of birds and beasts dislike the wet as much as we do. Game birds, such as pheasants and partridges frankly refuse to leave cover. Geese are restless and shyer than usual, while ducks who appear to revel in mists and fogs and the choking, driving rain, are even more unapproachable than when the weather is bright and warm.

Here, however, I must hasten to say that for such a sport as duck-fighting a certain amount of cold and wind, sometimes even a snow-storm or down right bad weather, is infinitely preferable to fine, warm weather, and old hands will tell you that they have never had good bags of ducks when they were comfortable.

Somerville's lines come in aptly here.

Unwearied patience, persevering toil,
Alone can crown the fowler's eager hopes,
What-e'er the season or what-e'er the sport.

Snipe often seem to disappear altogether in rainy weather, the fact being that they like the cool for their long migratory flights.

I have sundry recollections of shooting trips when the gods of the weather, if there be such gods, were at war with the Red gods, and when poor mortals, who depend so much upon these unseen deities for their welfare, had a pretty rough time of it.

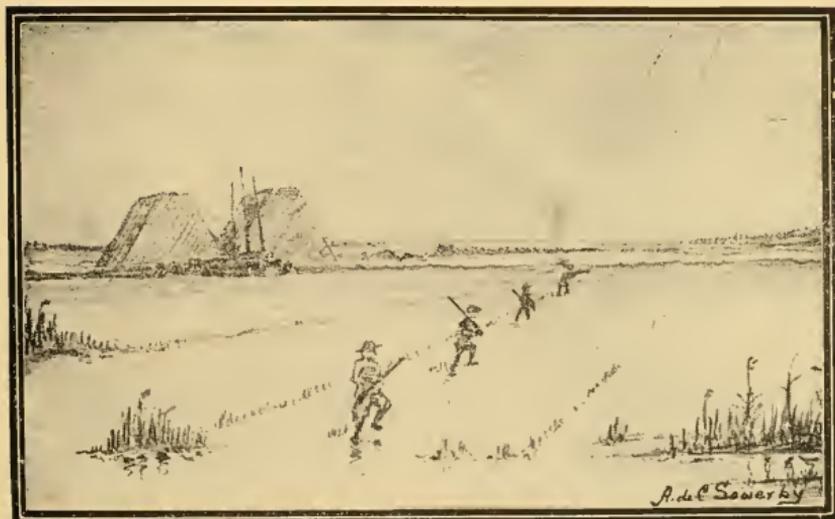
In other words I have been on some very disappointing shooting excursions whose failure was due to the exigences of the weather.

Well do I remember three days in a native houseboat, about six months ago. There were three of us, old hands all, who should not have been caught out with such un-promising signs to warn us: but reports of good snipe grounds had been coming in, and we could not resist the temptation of going out and trying our luck.

Two other boat-loads of eager sportsmen left the Ta-hung-chiao at the same time that we did, and as one member of this party had secured



Geese are restless and shyer than usual.



Four forlorn figures plodded wearily through the wickedest kind of snipe ground.

a launch, all three boats were hitched up to her, and we sped away up stream towards Kao-chuang-tze at a fine rate and in high spirits.

As yet there was no hint in the clear blue sky of the dirty weather ahead, but I could not altogether forget having noticed a fall in the barometer the morning we left.

Our troubles began when the launch ran on to a bar in the river that marks the limit at which the tide is felt. After tinkering about for a bit we left her there with the instructions to catch us up as soon as she could get clear, and, with the houseboats under sail, continued up the river till dark overtook us. Needless to say we did not see the launch again till our return three days later.

That night the rain commenced to fall, and, like good Britishers, we growled at our luck. This had no effect; so we implored of the weather gods and poured libations. We tried to keep up our spirits with yarns of good bags and other cheerful topics; but it was a dismal trio that turned in at about nine, hoping against hope for fine weather in the morning.

It was no use, however, for rain was still falling when we woke. Not to be outdone we turned out and in the usual way worked through all the likely looking spots we could find. It did not take long to get through, but never a bird did we bag.

Breakfast was a dismal affair. While we were at it the other two boats, which we had left behind during the night passed us. But the hilarity of their occupants seemed to have considerably diminished, and an unwonted gloom covered their erstwhile jovial faces.

After breakfast one of our party flatly refused to go out any more. He had had enough of it, so, with a novel to read, and a bottle of refreshment at hand, tucked himself in bed, where he spent the greater part of the day. The other two of us spent the whole morning hard at work, with the net result of exactly one snipe each.

Our friends in the other boats fared no better; in fact they got no birds at all.

My mind goes back to the picture of three house-boats moored in the shelter of some stacks of reeds, their sodden rigging beating dolefully against the gaunt, black masts, whilst four forlorn figures plodded

wearily through the wickedest kind of snipe ground—the kind where the mud is a foot deep, and the reeds have been cut, leaving the sharp stumps so that one's boots are punctured, stockings or puttees torn to shreds and feet and legs grazed and scarred. The surrounding country was as flat as a pan-cake, which, with the leaden skies relieved by neither break nor even a thinning of the clouds, rendered the scene unutterably dreary.

Now and then a gun would be discharged, and still more seldom a snipe retrieved for the birds were wild and few and far between. The lady of the party remained in the shelter of the house-boat knitting socks for "dear Harold," who was fluently swearing his way through the iniquitous swamp, while the remaining sportsmen, three in number, dug out from the depths of the hold certain mysterious bottles from which they proceeded to draw comfort like the old tentmaker of the Rubaiyat.

Then to his earthen Bowl did I adjourn,
My Lip the secret Well of Life to learn:

Alas, for high ideals of sport. That outing so gaily commenced was fast degenerating into an ordinary bibulous picnic, but fortunately there was the presence of the eternal feminine, which Bland declares has no place on a house-boat, except in one's dreams, and the carouse was stayed.

On our particular boat liquid comfort was soon used up which was in a way fortunate for there was no restraining influence aboard.

After two days of this miserable wet weather, the whole party returned, and as if to mock at our disappointment, the clouds lifted and the sun shone warm and bright as we reached the outskirts of the town.

A house-boat after all is not so had a place to be in when it rains; in fact it is snug and dry compared with even the best of tents.

If my reader really wants to experience the full joys of bad weather when on a shooting trip, let him get caught in the Manchurian forest, so that he has to pitch his tent in the rain, and then have a week of rainy weather on top of that; or, better still, let him find himself in some such out-of-the-way spot without any tent at all, with the deadwood

all sodden from the rain, and I assure him that not by the greatest stretch of imagination in after days, when he thinks it over, will he discover anything humorous in such an experience. I have never been able to do so.

One calls to mind such an experience, when, in the company of some Russian hunters, and with just what one could carry on one's back---an oil-skin, an overcoat and a few pounds of food---in the way of protection and supplies, one spent a week in the Kirin forest. It was pleasant enough while the weather was fine, but when rain came on during the night, soaking one to the skin, putting out the camp fire and rendering everything sodden, it was about the last thing in discomfort.

On another occasion in the Manchurian forest country I remember experiencing a solid month's rain, when day after day the storm clouds gathered and swept up the river on whose banks I was camped, blotting out the landscape as they came. Day after day I went the rounds of my traps, returning soaked through and through, and chilled to the bone, despite the fact that it was the middle of summer.

Travelling by cart or pack-mule in wet weather is another of the joys of up country life, but in this case it is the animals that suffer most, for the extra strain on them is very severe, while the inevitable result of the rain is to bring on saddle-sores and rope-galls, no matter how carefully the packs or traces are adjusted.

How to forecast the weather, and so be prepared for what is coming is a question, which, doubtless, but few shooting men can consider with anything but interest, for, as already pointed out, the weather conditions have a very strong influence on the quarry.

Perhaps then, a few remarks on the North China weather conditions, by one, who has made more or less a study of the subject for the past ten years, may prove helpful.

It must be presumed, of course, that the reader knows all about reading the barometer. A recording aneroid barometer is the best to have, as it saves one a deal of trouble in jotting down records of the daily, almost hourly, rises and falls, that are necessary if one is going

to form any idea of what is coming. One can see at a glance on such an instrument what has been happening for the past few days, as the red or blue ink line zigzags up and down over the square-ruled paper.

In the following remarks we may leave the summer and winter months out of consideration, as during the former there is no shooting, while during the latter the weather conditions do not materially effect such shooting as there is to be had. Of course, if one happens to see a big fall in the barometer in winter one would be foolish to plan a shooting trip immediately, for your North China blizzard can be pretty bad, especially in the mountainous districts.

Ordinarily-speaking March and April are windy months in North China. One may expect winds every afternoon, rather more severe every fifth or sixth day. The glass starts falling just after noon and continues to fall till late in the evening, then rises a little, falls again, and finally rises steadily during the morning till its maximum height is reached again at about noon. This is the regular course of events, and any deviations from this presage a change of weather. If it is a bigger drop than usual, then more severe wind or else rain may be expected. Rapid falls during these two months indicate a dust-storm; slow falls lasting over several days wet weather.

The inclination to windiness grows less as the end of April is reached, and in May rains may be expected.

The old couplet:—

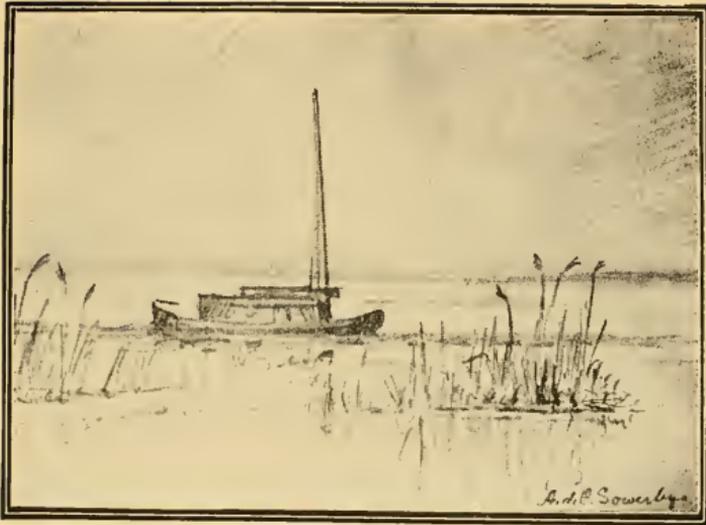
Short notice, soon past;

Long foretold, long last.

comes in useful here. A sudden drop indicates a shower or at most a few hours' rain; while a long steady fall indicates perhaps three days steady rain, or a weeks' dull weather with frequent rain-storms.

The daily fluctuations in May are not so great as in March or April, so that more importance may be attached to falls or rises of over 25 points (a point being one hundredth of an inch).

Another interesting point to know is that the average height of the barometer in summer is anything from 100 to 200 points below what it is in winter. Thus as the spring season advances the average level



A house-boat after all is not so bad a place to be in when it rains.



The storm-clouds swept up the river.....blotting out the landscape.

steadily falls, which fall should not be taken into consideration in prognosticating the weather.

In August, when the snipe shooting begins, the sportsman should still keep his eye on the barometer, but the thermometer is also useful, for this is the period of sudden, drenching storms, which may or may not last over a day or two. They usually follow spells of fine hot weather, coming as a rule immediately after the climax of temperature has been reached. That is to say if you are having a temperature of, say, 99° F. to 104° F. in the shade, then you may expect heavy rain before night, and you would be foolish to take a party of ladies in their nice summer hats and frocks out for an afternoon excursion in a motor-boat.

September and October see more settled conditions, when the fluctuations in the barometer does not vary more than 25 to 30 points sometimes for weeks at a stretch. At such times a drop of 40 points indicates a spell of rain, while a sudden drop of even 20 points means at least a few hours' rain.

We have just experienced a rather unusual weather phenomenon in the fierce wind, unaccompanied by rain on Tuesday night (Sept. 26th and 27th). My readers may remember how oppressively hot it was for the two preceding days. The barometer gave plenty of indication, for it began falling at 11.30 o'clock on the 23rd and reached its lowest level at 4 o'clock in the afternoon of the 26th, having fallen from 30.52" to 30.30", a drop of 22 points. This fall was accompanied on the morning of the 26th with a marked decrease in the temperature.

From the sportsman's point of view such a sudden change in the weather is chiefly interesting in that it brings the geese and ducks and snipe hurrying southward. On the afternoon of the 26th those, who were fortunate enough to be out, found the snipe thick; they had come down ahead of the storm. The wild geese were heard passing overhead during the night in great quantities; while ducks and teal were seen in large numbers during the days that followed.

It is not always easy to tell whether a fall in the barometer is caused by the approach of wet weather or of a wind storm; but there is a very useful little instrument, the wet-and-dry-bulb thermometer,

or hygrometer, as it is called, which will help by giving the humidity of the air.

If, then, the fall in the barometer is accompanied by a very humid atmosphere, one may reasonably argue that rain is coming. If it is accompanied by a very dry atmosphere one can be equally certain of a wind.

Thus with the exercise of a little intelligence and common sense, the watching of such meteorological instruments as are available, and deductions from one's readings, the sportsman need never be caught in dirty weather, but,—well who is not willing to take a chance, and where will you find the shooting man with the dazzling prospects of snipe, and duckflights, geese, quail and pheasants before his eyes, who will heed the warnings of the weather clerk? I never have, and, until my bones are very much more rheumaticy than they are now and my eye a good deal dimmer will I ever be warned by anything the barometer may tell me. Nor will you.



CHAPTER VII.

THE RING-NECKED PHEASANT.

Ah! what avail his glossy, varying dyes,
His purpled crest, and scarlet circled eyes,
The vivid green his shining plumes unfold,
His painted wings and breast that flames with gold.

—*Pope.*

THE RING-NECKED PHEASANT.



N all probability there is no bird so dear to the heart of the sportsman as the common or ring-necked pheasant. Not only has this handsome bird come in for a deal of attention at the hands of shooting men in China, but financiers and scientists have been busy with him, till it would take a good sized volume to deal adequately with him as a subject.

Over the length and breadth of old China, the land of dreams and fancies, where the lover of nature may revel in a world of strange birds and beasts and plants or the sportsman may shoot to his heart's content, that is, if they can get away from the treaty ports, where the cold light of Western Civilization is casting its spell over the native mind and dazzling it with its glamour of wealth and seeming power,—over this vast so-called Republic the common-ring-necked pheasant in all his glory holds sway as the greatest and grandest and best of the sporting birds.

Of what account are Emperors, Kings or Presidents, so long as his lustrous plumage is seen in the cornfields and the brake, or his mating call rings across upland and valley!

It matters not whether the wanderer takes his way through the coastal provinces of the East and South, up the steamy Yang-tze valley, into the fastnesses of the fertile West, across the barrens of the North or beyond the Eastern Pass into the forest-lands of Manchuria, he will meet with the pheasant.

Sometimes it will be in large bouquets of twenty to thirty birds, sometimes only in twos and threes, according to whether the district has come under the devastating influence of cold-storage export compaaias, and the ruthless demands of the game markets of treaty ports, or whe-

ther it still remains unexploited. The native, apart from the influence of the European and American, leaves the pheasant severely alone; in some places the bare idea of shooting the bird appealing to his frugal mind as a ridiculous waste of good powder and shot.

In whatever way the uncontaminated native of the interior views the killing of pheasants, however, those of the coast are quick enough to see the profit to be made by supplying the wants of the white man, and do not hesitate to benefit by it. This would not matter so much if the government also saw the value of its game and acted accordingly; but it does not.

The inability on the part of even educated Chinese to realize the economic value of game is extraordinary, and, to a large extent, accounts for the impunity with which such heavy inroads have been made upon the feathered game of the Yang-tze and Manchuria.

It never occurs to those who hold the reins of power in this strife-ridden land that there is a deep and inexhaustible potential wealth for the Chinese people and a source of revenue for the hard pressed government in the game of the country.

If Oregon values her game resources at five million gold dollars a year, and California counts on an annual income from her game of twenty million gold dollars, what must be the potential value of China's game?

Some of us have tried to open the eyes of those in authority, and have urged the protection of the game birds and animals of the country; but with scarcely any result. So, dear reader! if you be a shooting man, and a fellow admirer of the great bird, you may "put it in your pipe and smoke it", to use a bit of expressive slang, that your pheasants are going. Going where many another fine game bird and animal has gone. Going to swell the bursting pockets of those who care not a rap for sport, but see in every living thing on the face of the earth, either a means to increase that stream of gold or else a useless encumberer of the soil, a thing that should be got rid of as soon and as efficiently as possible.

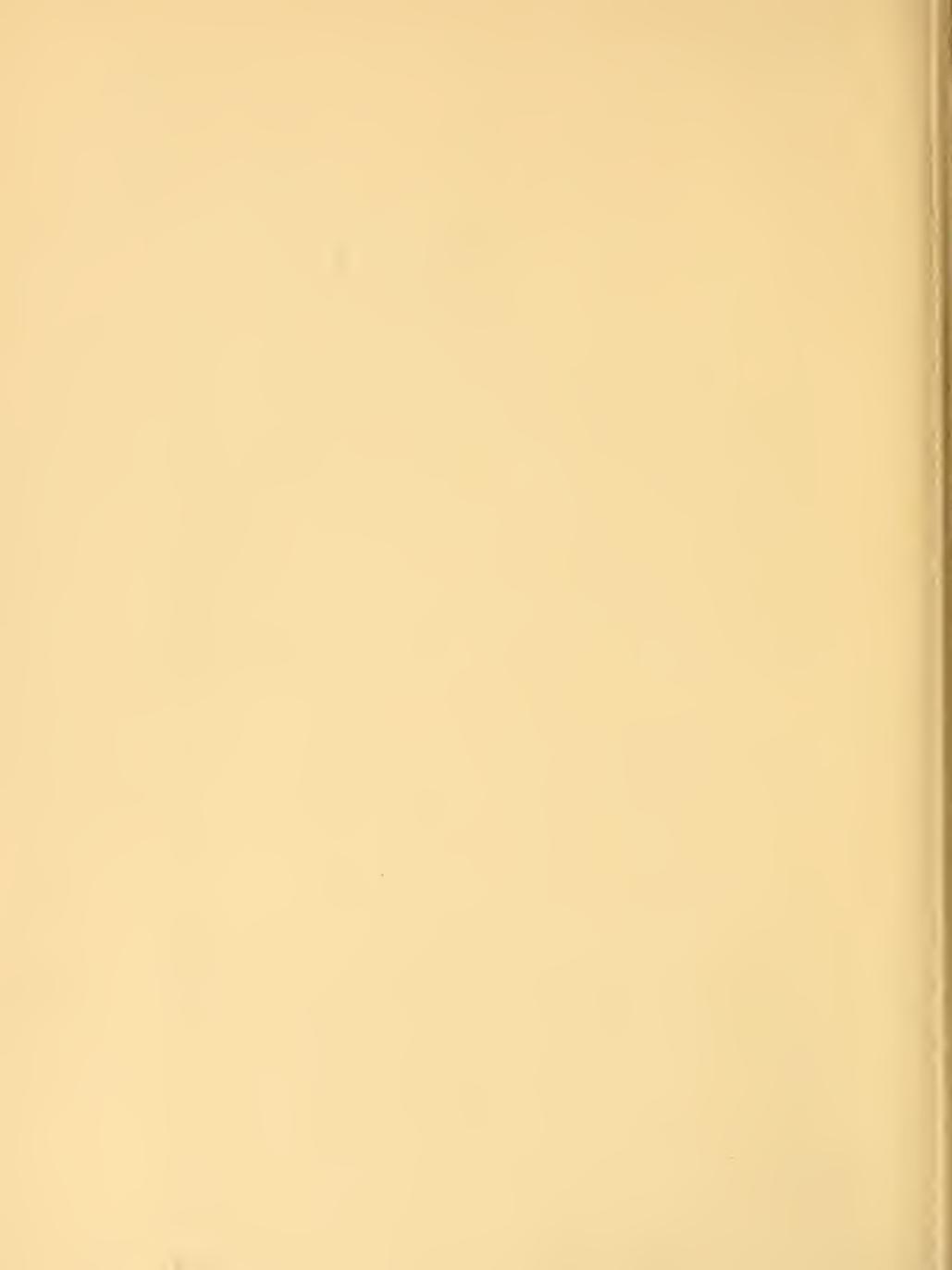


Photo by T. B. Van Corbae, Esq.

A good bag on the Yang-tze.



Typical pheasant country in North Shensi.



This being the case,—and to any one who likes to enquire I am prepared to offer proofs that it is,—let us take one last look at this king of game birds, as he is represented in the various forms that inhabit this country.

Alas! too soon there will be no other way of enjoying him except by armchair reminiscence; for the actual shooting of him will be as unattainable to us out here as it is for the average man of modest means at home.

Buturlin, the Russian ornithologist, and many other authorities have been busy with the genus *Phasianus* to which the pheasant belongs, and have presented us with a number of names of species and subspecies: enough to bewilder the lay mind, and to puzzle even that of the bird-man himself. Mr. La Touche has been very kind in helping me in studying the Chinese pheasants, and so, without going into details and the reasons for eliminating many of the forms given by Buturlin, one is able to say that there are some seven well defined species in China and Manchuria.

Following is a list of these with the range and a short description of each.

1. *Phasianus pallasii* Rothschild.

Habitat:—Siberia, North Manchuria and the Ussuri region.

A pale bird with a broad white collar.

P. alpherakyi But. and *P. alpherakyi ussuriensis* But. are synonyms for this bird according to Ogilvie Grant of the British Museum.

2. *P. kiangsuensis* Buturlin.

Hab.:—South and South-west Manchuria, Chihli, Shansi and North Shensi.

A dark bird with conspicuous white eyebrows; broad and complete white collar; sheen on side of neck above white collar, green; flanks and upper back coppery-yellow.

First described as a subspecies of *torquatus*, but probably a full and distinct species.

3. *P. torquatus* Gmelin.

Hab:—From the Yellow River southward, including the Lower Yang-tze basin, South-east and South China.

A form with light yellow flanks and upper back feathers, conspicuous white eyebrows, a narrow white collar—complete or incomplete with a purple sheen on side of neck.

4. *P. decollatus* Swinhoe.

Hab:—Eastern Yunnan, Western Kueichow and South-eastern Szechuan.

A dark bird with neither white collar nor eyebrows: coppery brown breast with purple sheen.

5. *P. elegans* Elliot.

Hab:—Western Szechuan.

A dark bird with no collar or eyebrows, having a dark green breast.

6. *P. strauchii* Przewalski.

Hab:—Mongolia, Western and South-Western Kansu, and on into Central Asia.

No white eyebrow: Collar variable (sometimes present, sometimes absent): dark upper back and flanks, the latter coppery-red with wide black apical band on the feathers. *P. holderi* Scholow is a synonym.

7. *P. berezowskyi* Rothschild.

Hab:—South-eastern Kansu, Southern Shensi, North-eastern Szechuan, Western Honan and North-western Hupei.

No white eyebrow: collar variable (sometimes broad but incomplete, sometimes absent altogether): dark upper back and flanks: rich coppery-brown breast with purple sheen. This bird is apparently very close to *P. strauchii*.

Notwithstanding the fact that the pheasant has been subject to so much persecution in the Yang-tze regions, it is occasionally possible to make good bags there. One party consisting of two guns piled up a bag last winter in six days of 154 pheasants. I refrain from mentioning the exact spot, as it was told me in confidence, but it must have

been a beauty, for besides the pheasants 17 woodcock, 28 snipe, 11 partridges, 14 quail, 41 ducks and 7 hares were shot, making a total bag of 272 head.

Another party discovered a good little spot where some forty or fifty pheasants were bagged by two guns in a couple of days. But such bags are very rare nowadays, and only the privileged few who know of the spots may hope to make the like.

It is only when one comes to the interior of North China that there is still possibility of really large bags being made; and here I must ask the reader's pardon for again not giving details of exact localities. It is not because I wish to be greedy and reserve the spots for myself and my friends, but because I fear the avariciousness that is the mark of the age and values every bird, beast and fish from an £. s. d. standard.

Rumour, and pretty strong rumour at that, has it that cold storage plants have been erected in this vicinity. What is there to stop the exploitation and wholesale exportation of our northern game birds and animals? At least it shall not be said that I have given away the exact localities where the birds are most plentiful; though I fear the general districts are already too well known.

In the following account of a few days' pheasant shooting "somewhere in North China," I have left out the names of places.

Before going any further I may explain that owing to the fact that it is such a nuisance to get a large bag back to the coast, and that the birds themselves are so plentiful, most sportsman who visit these interior places do not make anything like the bags that they might. After all twenty or thirty brace of pheasants, a few brace of partridges, a deer or two and possibly a good sized wild pig is a bag that should satisfy anybody, nor will the keenest sportsman long continue to revel in pheasant shooting, when he has to drive the birds off the main roads and bare fields into the brush, and flush them there before he can get a reasonably difficult shot; and that is just what it comes to in the places I refer to after the first few days' shooting.

With two companions, Ross and Douglas, keen sports both, and men who delight in roughing it, I found myself one fine, sparkling morning in February away up in the fastnesses of ————: We had travelled by rail and road, picking up a certain amount of sport by the way, for the best part of a week, and were now to try our luck with the pheasants.

A narrow valley lay before us, and already we could see a bouquet of fine cocks feeding on one of the fields below us.

What a day, what air and what prospects! I know my companions were as thrilled as I was with the ecstasy of it all.

The long days' marches, hearty meals and dreamless nights had put us into the pink of condition for what was before us.

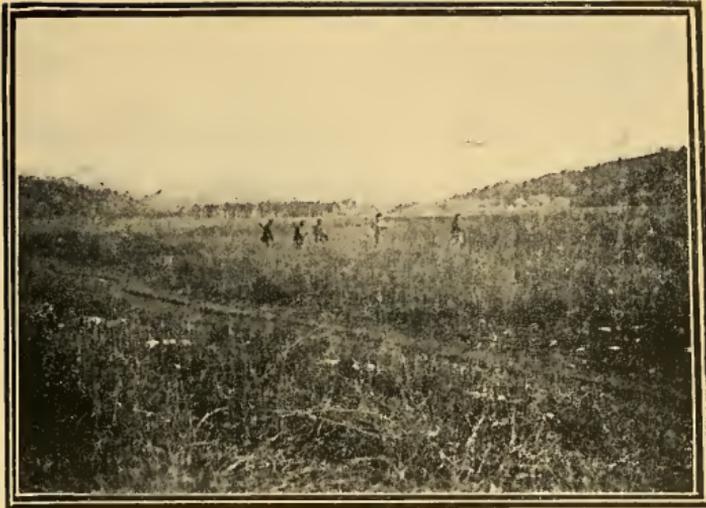
We had engaged some beaters, chief amongst whom was one that we named "Umslopagus" or Sloppy for short, on account of his prodigious height—six foot four if an inch—but alas, I fear he was about as unlike the Zulu hero as he could possibly be, for he was mostly talk, with very little at the back of him save an abnormal appetite, a good pair of eyes, and a stride that would take him across country at a ten-league pace.

In accordance with the very best precedence, when walking up pheasants in this country, we strung ourselves and beaters out in a line across the valley and commenced to walk down it.

Snow had fallen in the night and its whiteness threw up into sharp relief the pines that ran up one slope and the patches of scrub in the valley-bottom. It did more: it revealed the whereabouts of the pheasants and other game as their tell-tale tracks wound in long chains over its surface. Thus we were able to save a lot of time, beating only such cover as we knew to contain birds.

The proceedings opened when the half dozen cocks that we had seen on leaving our village broke cover. Our guns rang out and three of the six birds dropped.

From where we were we spotted another bouquet of pheasants hurrying at the sound of our firing for the cover of some dense scrub across the valley. We crossed over and again the birds rose as the beaters

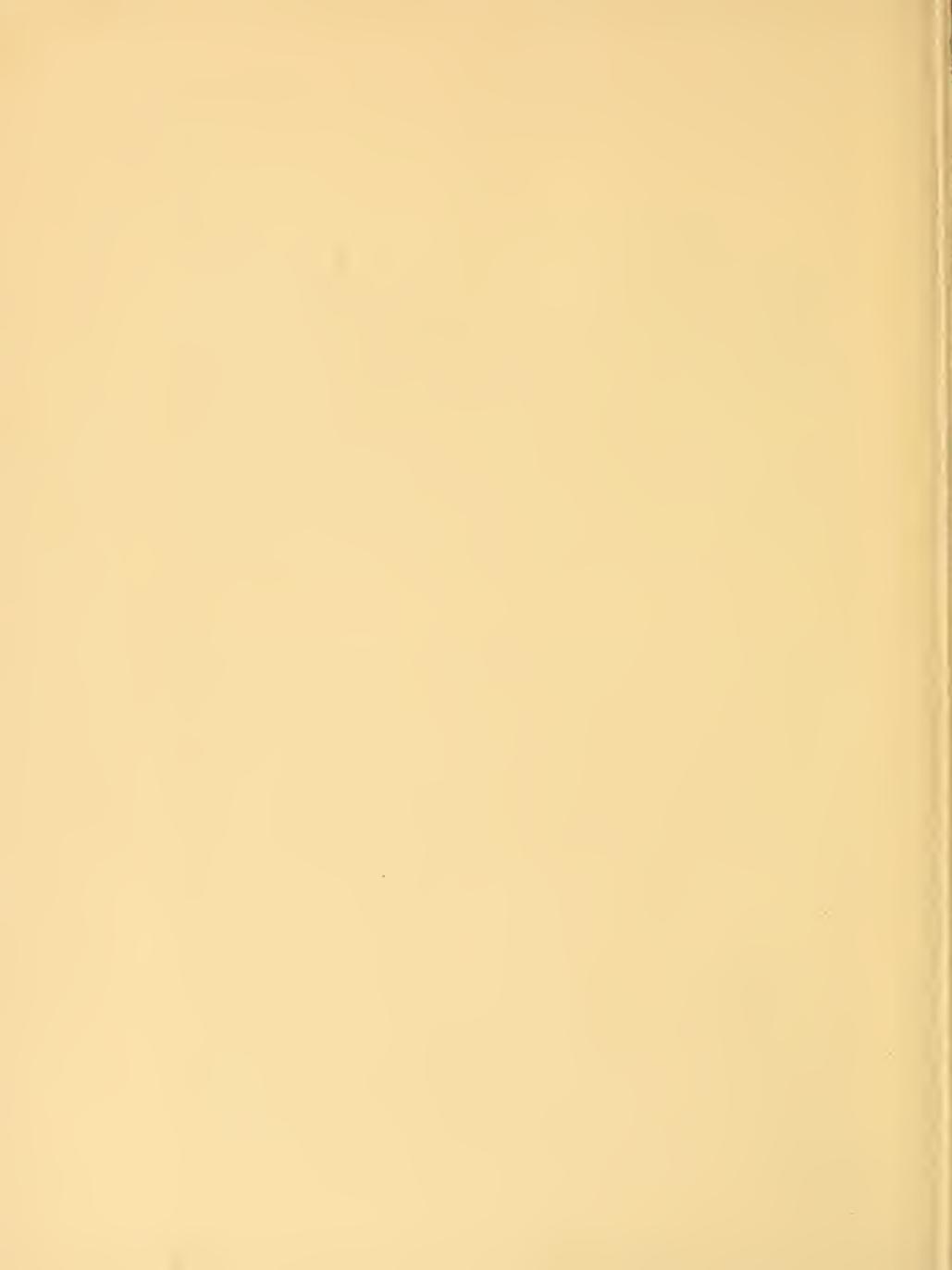


Thorn scrub and wild vine dotted the otherwise grassy valley-bottom.



Photo by H. E. Gibson, Esq.

A bag of ring-necked pheasants and wild-fowl, made on the Yang-tze.



entered the scrub. This time there were cocks and hens mixed, and we each dropped our bird at the first flush. There must have been fifty pheasants in that patch for they kept coming out in twos and threes. Alas for our shooting, the excitement of it threw us off, and we began to miss most disgracefully. Still we finally left the patch with another half-dozen birds.

Next a hare broke cover as we crossed a grassy slope and was potted, and then a covey of bearded partridges that had been feeding on the flat came up the hill, and took cover some sixty yards above us. One of my companions, by the way, had gone back to where the pheasants had been seen to settle, so there were only two of us to take on the partridges.

Our luck was in, for, instead of the birds getting up altogether as is their usual way, they came out in ones and twos with the result that we bagged five of the plump little fellows. A little further on we flushed another covey and dropped three more of these sporting birds.

So the morning wore on. At noon we met again at a spot where the coolie with the lunch basket had been ordered to wait, and had the most delightful repast of pigeon-pie, jacketed potatoes and fruit tart. As is usual on such occasions the morning's doings were gone over again, till Sloppy, whose eyes were of the sharpest, broke up the proceedings by pointing out some pheasants not a hundred paces away.

In less time than it takes to tell we were strung out again in a semi-circle, and were converging on the birds. These, however, took to the hills, which is their way in the afternoon, and we gave chase. Up they went, running swiftly, dodging in and out the cover and loose boulders, and refusing to fly. They topped the ridge and vanished over into the next ravine. By a spurt I got up before they had gone far, and made them fly. I dropped a couple as they rose. The rest, passing over my companions, came in for a charge or two of shot from their guns, which left two more of their number flapping in the snow.

On down the valley we went, getting more birds, both pheasants and partridges, till the day was far spent and it behoved us to make tracks for our temporary home, which we reached long after dark, tired,

hungry, but triumphant, for had we not the handsome bag of eight brace of pheasants, six brace of partridges and a hare? It looked imposing enough as drawn, and with the cavities filled with charcoal, the birds hung in the cool store-room of the house we occupied.

That night's dinner was a great success, for we had struck it right, and it was followed by celebrations till the demands of tired limbs and heavy eye-lids could no longer be ignored, and we turned in. How my companions did snore! bless them, but soon I dropped off, only to go over in my dreams the glorious doings of the day.

Morning saw us early astir, stiff but full of enthusiasm. Breakfast finished, we sallied forth with expectations of another day's good shooting. Nor were we disappointed. The first day's bag was beaten by a few brace of birds, for this time we knew better where to look.

After this we left the pheasants alone for a bit, devoting our time to deer and wild pigs, for when one gets a couple of days' bird shooting as good as we had had, one feels inclined to let it go at that: at least that was how we felt.

Two days later when we changed ground for a place some fifty miles away, we did some more bird shooting on the way. On this journey we actually discovered some solitary snipe that had made their winter quarters in a valley with an open stream running down one side.

Our bag of birds was brought up to 93 head, of which 41 were pheasants, 42 partridges, 4 solitary snipe and 6 wild pigeons. Besides this Douglas had bagged a bustard on the way to the mountains, and both he and Ross had secured a deer. Later on I had the luck to get a leopard, two pigs and two deer, which, with a brace of hares, brought the whole bag up to 103 head.

We could have had a great many more pigeons, but after a couple of shots at these rather too plentiful birds, we refrained by mutual consent from shooting any more.

As for the pheasant shooting we had had enough. It had not been too easy and was always sporting, but what were we to do with such quantities of birds, with five days' road journey and two by rail ahead of us?

On our way back to civilization, by which name we are pleased to distinguish between our mundane life at the treaty ports and the one we live up country when out on a shooting trip, we saw any amount of birds, but so content were we with the sport we had enjoyed, that we left them alone.

Just imagine the three of us walking past a bouquet of twelve superb cock pheasants that were strutting about in a ploughed field not twenty yards from the road, their fiery plumage flashing in the long slant rays of the setting sun, without so much as a thought in our minds of reaching for our guns, which were handy enough on the pack-mules! We simply admired the magnificent birds, jestingly remarked what excitement there would have been had we been on our way into the shooting country instead of out, and passed on.

Well! there they were, and there we left them, but the picture of them on that glorious February evening, with the bare loess cliffs behind them, the stark and twisted branches of thorn scrub lining the dull, brown field on which they sought their food, their own blazing plumage, gold and green and burnished copper, or bronze, so well set off by their dull, drab surroundings, and the red sun dipping in a veil of purple mists towards the deep blue line of the distant hills, will remain for ever in my mind. I know that it had its effect upon my companions; for many a time since then they have opened up the conversation with the remark, "Do you remember those twelve cocks we saw.....?" and forthwith we have been launched upon a sea of reminiscence as we call up those three glorious weeks' shooting—"somewhere in North China."





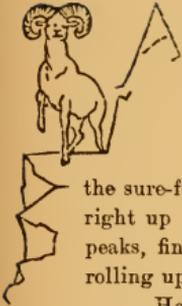
CHAPTER VIII.

TWO GRAND OLD RAMS.

But here, above, around, below,
 On mountain or in glen,
Nor tree, nor shrub, nor plant, nor flower,
Nor aught of vegetative power,
 The weary eye may ken.
For all is rocks at random thrown,
Black waves, bare crags, and banks of stone,
 As if were here denied
The summer sun, the spring's sweet dew,
That clothe with many a varied hue
 The bleakest mountain side.

—Scott

TWO GRAND OLD RAMS.



WAY off, in the extreme north-west of Shansi, there lies country as wild and desolate as the heart of town-wearied man can desire. The mountains, rocky and barren of any heavy vegetation, yet beautiful in their rugged grandeur, rise abruptly from the flattest and dryest of plains. Deep and narrow valleys, whose sheer sides are unscalable by any save the sure-footed denizens of that remote region, run their tortuous courses right up into the heart of the mountains, through a confusion of great peaks, finally ending, thousands of feet above the level of the plain, in rolling uplands of waving grass and low scrub.

Here, where the soil is too poor and the conditions too hard for even the patient toiling native of the district to scrape a living, where none but an occasional hunter or grass-cutter intrudes upon his solitudes, lives a ram, the like of which few sportsmen have ever set eyes upon.

He belongs to that species known to science as the maned-sheep (*Ovis jubata* Peter), and to the big-game hunters of these parts as the Argali, which is the native name for the big-horn sheep of Mongolia.

This magnificent ram has been seen by but few Europeans, though he is well enough known to the local native hunters.

He haunts a particular spur that rises above the tops of all the neighbouring peaks, and there, 'mid the eternal solitudes of his realm, holds sway. No other ram dares violate the sanctity of his kingdom, though he allows ewes and the little spike-horned lambs to graze at will on the rich grassy slopes that flank his fortress.

Yearly, when his sides are fat from the rich autumn feeding, the madness of the rutting season takes him and he goes careering over the country seeking the other lords of his race, with whom to do battle for his harem of sleek, grey-coated, gentle ewes. It is not enough that

he should have them; he must fight for them, and, to satisfy this craving, he becomes dangerously aggressive.

He leaves his domain, his wives following quietly and trustingly where their lord chooses to go, and scours the uplands and the spurs that radiate from them for an enemy, nor is he ever disappointed. Such is the lust for conquest that springs up every autumn in the hearts of these sheep, so gentle and timid at other times, that there are never wanting rams, who, year by year, will meet this king in battle for the sake of his kingdom.

From afar the two lords of the crags spy each other and lose no time in crossing the dividing chasms and spurs, till they stand but a few yards apart. Eyeing each other with the concentrated hate of rivalry, they stamp with fury and shake their solid, circling horns, uttering the while their peculiar sneezing coughs. Then down go their heads, and, like rocks from a catapult, they launch themselves upon each other. The two living thunderbolts of forty or fifty pounds of solid horn driven by two hundred pounds of bone and steel-like muscle meet with a crash that resounds and echoes amongst the crags and rocks. The impact is tremendous and the weaker ram goes down, but regains his feet with marvellous agility; while, with the instincts of a gentleman, the king backs away. When both rams are sufficiently far apart they charge again. Chips fly as horn strikes horn, and the clang and din may be heard a mile away.

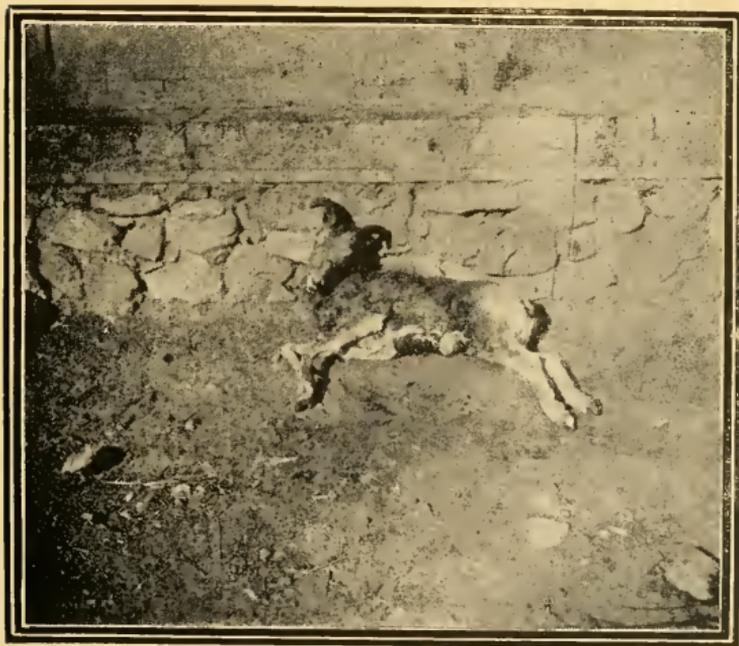
Soon, however, the smaller ram, realizing that he is out-matched, turns to fly the field, as our hero bares down upon him, and helps him in his headlong flight with heavy butts in the rear. Then, with head proudly erect and mincing gait, the victor returns to the herd of admiring ewes.

This goes on for several weeks till none dares meet the king in combat and even he gives up any further idea of showing off his prowess.

All the while during this period of madness, when most rams are easily approached by the hunter, the king has not relaxed his vigilance. He has learnt too well the danger that lurks in the ravines and chasms of his haunts to forget it even during his love affairs. The



Where the Shansi ram holds sway.



An ewe of the Shansi wild sheep.

result is, he escapes year after year when others of his kind succumb to the flying bullet, year by year, adding to the length and circumference of his superb horns. The herds he takes in charge are safely guarded from danger. He leads them where food is plentiful and watches for any foe, especially the great, gaunt wolves of the district, and the keen-eyed, stealthy Mongol hunters. The eagles and foxes that prey upon the lambs he leaves to the ewes, for they can easily cope with them.

The herd of ewes stays with him right into January, then, one by one, each expectant mother goes off alone. The desire for seclusion has seized her and she becomes even shyer and more retiring than ever.

The old king is left to himself, for it is many years since, like the other rams of his district, he has sought solace and companionship amongst the other bereft lords of his kind. He remains alone, keeping to his fortress of towering rock, whence, day by day, he scans the surrounding peaks and ridges for possible enemies.

There let us leave him for a while as we follow the wanderings and doings of one member of his harem.

She is a gentle creature, with widely spreading, curved, but narrow horns. Her coat is a rich fawn-grey, with a conspicuous white patch behind. Her eyes are bright and of a fine, rich, orange or golden-yellow colour.

Leaving the grassy uplands, she seeks the shelter of the ravines that cut into the sides of the chasm-like valleys, and thence, after a month or six weeks of quiet grazing and rest, she reappears with a couple or the cutest little lambs—all legs and head. They follow her about with extraordinary agility, growing rapidly, day by day, till there is no longer any danger of their being left behind, even in the wildest flights that their mother chooses to take. That beacon-like patch on her stern guides them at these times of danger and all they have to do is to follow it.

The most frightful chasms have no fear for them: they might be birds the way they will hurl themselves over the edges of desperate cliffs, down which they seem to fall, lightly touching here and there till they reach some safe retreat, where the pursuing danger cannot come.

About the end of March the ewes begin to herd together again. During the summer they come further down towards the plain and will even feed upon the lowest slopes, where, the shepherds will tell you, they mix with the flocks of domestic sheep and goats.

The old rams, on the other hand, go further back into the mountains, all except our hero, who, scornful of the ways of his kind, keeps to his fortress and defies the gun-men, who, year by year, have sought his life.

The first^d white man to discover this grand old ram was my friend "American" Schroder, who showed me his haunts early in the year 1912. We tried to get him that year but failed, though we managed to secure a head or two worth having.

Two and a half years later I tried for him again, but, though I saw his highness once or twice, I failed to get even a long shot at him.

One day I remember seeing him on a distant ridge while I was working up towards the grassy uplands with another sportsman. We got the glasses out and could plainly make out the fine sweep of horn that belonged to the royal beast. My companion set out to stalk him, and though he kept out of sight till he was within a hundred yards of the spot where the ram had stood, the clever animal had scented danger and had either hidden or run for safety. My turn came a day or two later, but the result was the same.

Schroder has tried several times since to get the ram, and vows that he will yet possess those mighty horns, but so far all attempts to stalk the knowing old fellow have failed. He disappears in the most extraordinary way every time one tries to stalk him, nor is it easy to find him in the first place.

There he is and, I fear, there he will remain, to carry his circle-and-a-half horns, which he holds so proudly aloft, with him as he fights his yearly battles and enjoys the reward of his strength and prowess, till his splendid golden-yellow eyes grow dim and his giant strength fails, and some less noble lord of the crags drives him from his kingdom and usurps his rights.

One can picture that last fight on the edge of some great chasm, the monarch beaten to his knees, yet refusing to run from those he has always conquered. Perhaps he will die fighting, preferring to have his life battered out by his opponent's unsparing blows; or he may give ground till the edge of the cliff is reached, and then, under the last driving charge of his triumphant rival, shoot out into the abyss and meet his death thousands of feet below on the rock-strewn floor of the canon. Perhaps! Who knows?

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THE sun was shining with that pale, cold light behind the filmy haze that indicates the approach of a North China blizzard. There was not the least warmth in its rays. From the north, whistling and shrieking down the deep defiles and chasms that mark the country where the wild sheep live, a piercing wind came blowing in fitful gusts. The streams, that, up till now, had remained partially open were frozen solid, and the sand of the valley-bottom raced over the glassy surface as it was driven in long, stinging lines before the wind. In one night cruel winter had laid its icy grasp upon the land, and every thing was bound fast for the coming months of cold and hunger.

Though there had been a good deal of frost and snow during the preceeding weeks, the weather had been fine and, during the day, actually warm. But that was all past. Henceforth it was to be winter, and winter in North Shansi, at an altitude of from two to seven thousand feet, is a thing to be dreaded.

It was into this biting cold and bitter north wind that my companion and I, accompanied by some native hunters, stepped from the cosy room that, for the time being, represented home. We had made our plans for the day's hunt, and, accordingly, he took a path that led up a steep ridge, while I followed the course of one of the larger valleys, where everything was in deep blue shadow and the cold was so intense that it hurt to breathe, while one's clothes actually crackled.

The day before I had spotted a fine old ram with a herd of about twenty ewes, but had not been able to get after him as it was

too late. To-day I hoped to pick him up again on the grassy uplands, and, if luck were with me, to get a shot at him.

For two hours we tramped steadily up the valley in the teeth of the wind. When the sides began to grow less high and steep, indicating that we were nearing the head, we turned to the left up a small ravine and soon found ourselves upon a wide expanse of almost flat country, with here and there a rocky cairn or granite ridge rising from its snow-covered surface.

We started to cross this, but had not gone far when the very herd I was looking for was discovered away to our left, and we shaped our course accordingly. The country was too flat for stalking, so it was best to get the sheep to move towards the ravines and valleys, which, on spying us, they very conveniently did.

However, this did not help us much, for they were badly frightened and would not commence feeding, but crossed ridge after ridge, while we followed at a distance of a mile or so, keeping out of sight as much as possible.

All day long this went on. On several occasions we came upon single rams or small herds that had taken shelter from the wind in the deep defiles and gorges, but none of them presented the required growth of horn and so were allowed to go.

At last, towards dusk, the herd we were after commenced to slow down and to nibble at the grass-heads that peeped above the snow. Then, as we lay behind a great boulder and watched, we saw the old ram lie down. Now was my chance, and, leaving the natives where they were, I commenced to stalk my quarry. He was lying just below a slight cliff above which the hill sloped gently. If only I could get above him, he would be mine.

By dint of much squirming and wriggling over the ground I at last reached the spot I wanted and peeped over the cliff. Yes, there he was just below me, while further down the steep slope the ewes grazed quietly.

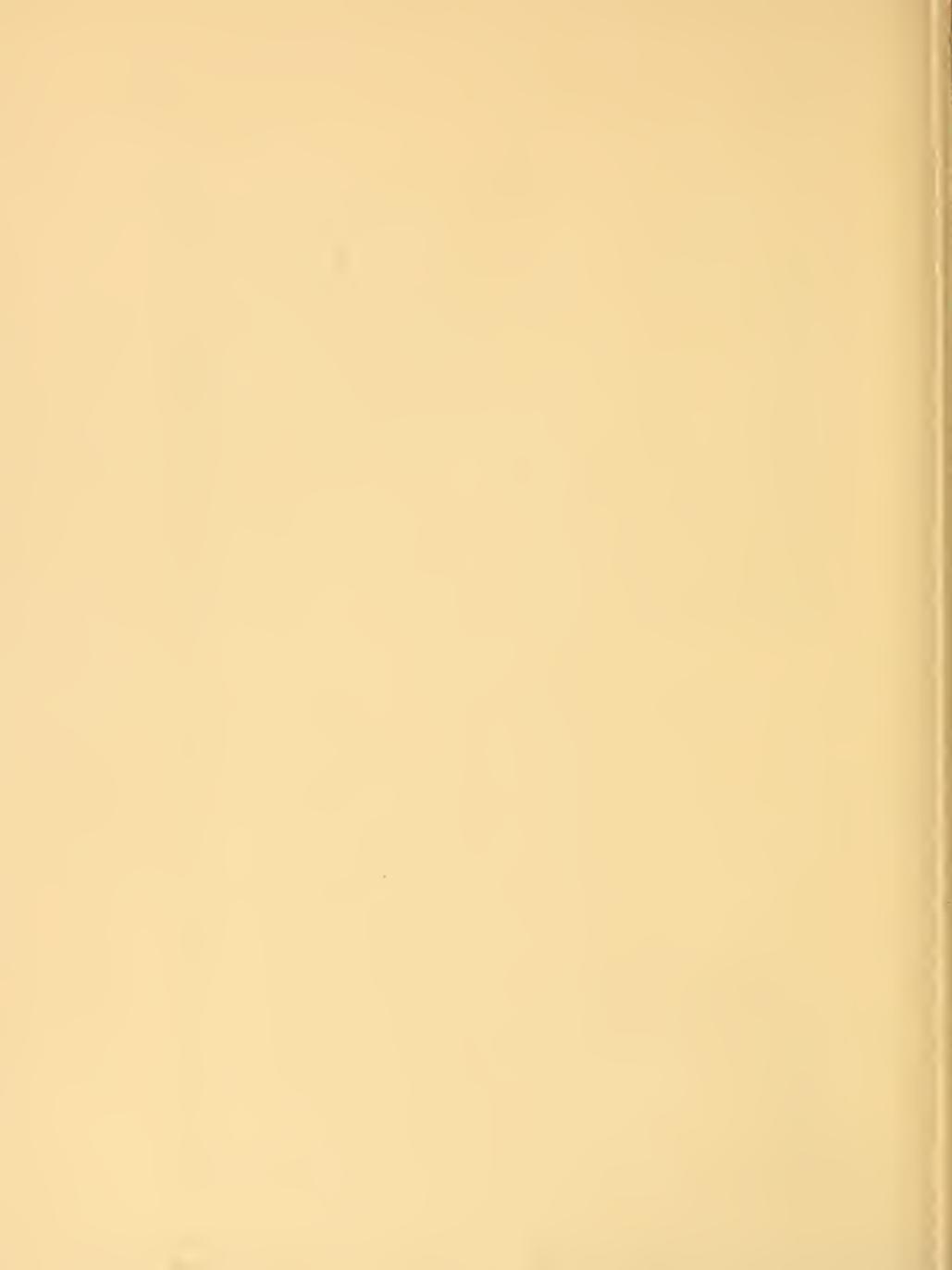
Slowly I raised my rifle, took a sight on the great ram's back between the shoulder blades and pressed the trigger. There was a soft click, but no report. I re-cocked my rifle and tried again. No result.



A head worth having.



The second ram, sketched where he lay.



At this moment the ram must have heard me, for he sprang up, gave the peculiar, sneezing cough with which the sheep family are wont to warn each other of danger, and was away like the wind.

My chance had passed. An examination of my rifle showed that the cold had frozen the oil in the bolt. Of course it was my fault, as I should not have had any oil there.

There was nothing for it but to go home, and a long and dreary tramp it was. I have never experienced such a day, for by the time we got in we had been tramping for ten hours without a break, while the thermometer was away below zero. Of course the first thing I did was to clean the oil out of my gun; but how I did kick myself for my carelessness!

Next morning I set out again with the intention of getting that ram. He must be mine if I followed him for a week, for I felt honour and reputation were at stake. Luck was with me, however, for we had not gone more than a couple of miles, when I found him and his herd in a deep valley, where they had evidently sheltered for the night. Off they went up a side ravine, but, for some reason, turned when they were near the head and came back as hard as they could run, offering me a good chance as they passed. I fired twice. One bullet hit the ground, but, at the second shot, an ewe fell out and rolled down the slope. Strange! I had not fired at an ewe, but at the ram, which had crossed a low ridge and disappeared. This was very vexatious, but I determined to get the ram now, come what might, so set off up the slope. At the top I came upon a spot of blood, and then another. Then I knew what had happened. I had hit the ram and the bullet had gone clean through his body and killed an ewe that must have been running beside him.

Scarcely had I gone ten steps over the ridge when the ram sprang up and commenced to run away. At my shot he stopped, swayed from side to side and then collapsed. When I reached him he was dead and his head was mine.

He was a beauty, with a fine pair of horns that measured well over forty inches, notwithstanding the fact that their ends were worn away and broken. He stood forty-four inches at the shoulder and must have weighed a good 300 lbs.



CHAPTER IX.

**FURTHER NOTES ON WILD GOOSE
SHOOTING.**

T'is now the fowler trims his little mast,
Equipped with gun, and dog of sturdiest strain,
Prepared to weather the relentless blast--
To deal destruction 'mid the feathered train.

--T. Hughes.

FURTHER NOTES ON WILD GOOSE SHOOTING.



I KNOW of few more enjoyable ways of spending a holiday than that of hunting the wild-goose, that wildest of birds, in country where he is plentiful and comparatively easy to get at. I say comparatively because under no circumstances is it ever really easy to approach wild-geese, while frequently it is utterly impossible to get near enough to shoot them with a fowling-piece.

One talks of a wild-goose chase as a thing to be avoided, but a real wild-goose chase, with real wild-geese as quarry is something to be sought after, enjoyed to the full and never forgotten. Unfortunately for Tientsin sportsmen, wild-geese no longer visit the immediate environment of this town, and even in places down the river or up country within easy reach, where they are known to occur, they are so shy and wild as to be almost unattainable. All the more credit, then, to the members of the shooting fraternity that can boast a goose or two in their season's bag.

Goose country, that is to say, country where the wild-geese are plentiful and where it is possible to come within range of them, occurs in various parts of China. On the Yang-tze large bags are made, the country north of Ning-kuo-fu on the Anhui-Kiangsu borders being particularly good, if one knows the exact spots to visit. The country round Newchwang and at the mouth of the Yalu River is also very good for geese.

None of these, however, can touch the big plains of the interior, where the great stretches of paddy-fields, the miles and miles of winter wheat, or the badly gleaned fields of sorghum (*kaoliang*) and millet offer the birds such a bountiful food supply. There is no exaggeration in the statement that the geese occur on these plains in hundreds

of thousands, while they have been so little shot at, that they are tame and easily approached, provided, of course, that one uses a certain amount of caution and ingenuity. It may be that one has to creep up behind a clump of graves, or make use of some unevenness in the ground, or ride casually up on one's pony and fire from his back, or choose a suitable spot for the morning or evening fighting; but the chief thing is that the geese on seeing a sportsman do not immediately take alarm and fly away as they have learned to do in the regions round Tientsin.

Even in these far away fowlers' paradises, where, it is conceivable that goose shooting might very soon cease to be sport, it is not always easy to get your birds; for your wild goose is no fool and he very soon learns where danger lies. The killing of a single bird out of a flock is enough to warn the whole lot, and it is surprising how quickly the geese of a district will discover who is the one to be feared, when it becomes very difficult to get a shot.

When I resided in Tai-yuan Fu in Shansi, and used to go out goose-shooting on the plain two or three times a week, incredible though it may seem, the wild geese knew me from any one else. It was absolutely impossible for me to get within shot gun range, though other members of the European community might walk up to within forty or fifty yards of them. If they happened to be flying overhead they always gave me a wide berth, and, during the latter part of my residence in that district, I could only get my geese with the rifle at long ranges.

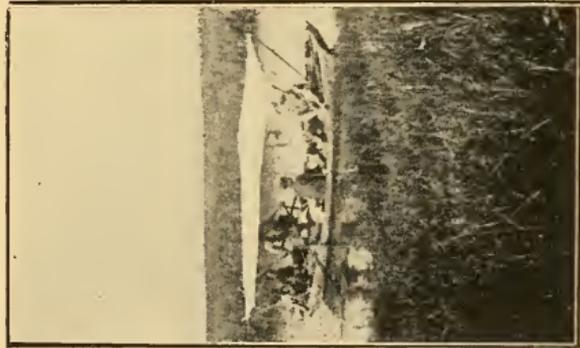
The valley of the Wei Ho in far off Shensi is a particularly fine place for geese, with its broad rolling acres of wheat, sorghum, and rice fields, its wide, sandy flats, open, muddy streams and grassy swamps. Here the geese may feed or sleep or play at will with none to disturb them, and here the sportsman may find that paradise of wild-fowl he has always pictured in his dreams.

Elsewhere I have written on an occasion, when, travelling with my brother on this plain, a bag of 15 geese was made in four days without our leaving the main road further than half a mile. With a little exertion and by taking a little more time to it, we could have



Photo by H. E. Gibson, Esq.

Mr. H. E. Gibson's 13½ lbs. goose.



Out after snipe in the environs of
Tientsin.

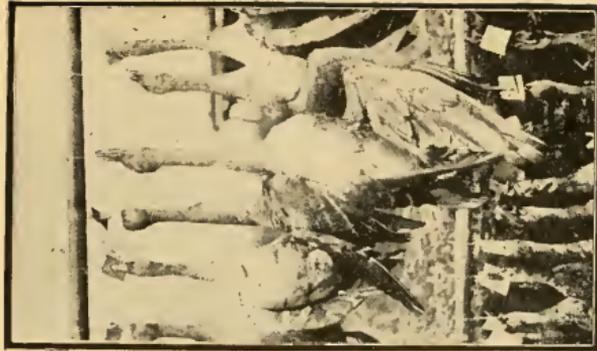


Photo by H. E. Gibson, Esq.

A bag of long-billed, and white-fronted geese.



doubled that bag; while by really settling down to it, especially as we neared Si-an-fu, we could have increased it ten-fold.

Once when out on this plain I secured five geese in less than an hour. Alone, and mounted on my little grey pony, I was making my way from Lin-t'ung to Si-an Fu, a distance of about fifteen miles, when I noticed that the geese seemed unusually plentiful, and as there were plenty of friends in the city who would help me dispose of the bag, I decided to spend an hour or so, and see what I could do.

My pony was trained to stand gun fire, so I rode up to a large flock of geese which began to cackle in the usual way as I approached. Out went all their necks, each bird watching me, till the grey old leader, who stood some yards apart, gave the signal and they all rose into the air. Bang! bang! two birds dropped back upon the ploughed field, while the rest went off towards the river which could be seen glistening in the distance.

I gathered in the bag and had turned back towards the road, when another flock showed up half a mile away. This one was feeding beside the stone wall of an orchard, and I decided to get nearer than I did to the last lot of geese to see if I could not get in more than a couple of shots. It is often possible to do this if you are quick in reloading, for the geese are apt to fly back to see what has happened to the birds lying on the ground.

The pony was soon tethered on the far side of the orchard, while I crept up under cover of the wall nearest the geese. Arrived at the spot I had marked, I looked over, rather carelessly I fear. Up went the geese, and I was able to get in only one shot. A large bird was grassed, however, and was added to the two already hanging from my saddle.

I felt I had had enough, so returned to the road, and was riding comfortably along, when I noticed a skein of geese coming straight overhead. It was impossible to resist the temptation of jumping off, and, with the pony's reins over my arm, taking a right and left as the birds passed close over me. Two more were thus added to the bag, and as five geese, weighing from 5 lbs. to 6½ lbs. a piece are about all a single horseman can comfortably manage to carry on his saddle I

refused to shoot any more, though flock after flock was passed feeding almost within gun shot of the road, while many a skien passed overhead.

Geese are not always so easily bagged as this, however, even on the Si-an Fu plain, and I could tell of disappointing days there and elsewhere. Stalking, and very careful stalking at that, must often be resorted to if one wishes to get even a shot at a wild goose.

I remember on one occasion near Si-an-fu two of us were riding over a long low bridge that spans one of the numerous, muddy streams, so characteristic of the great plain on which that city lies, when we saw a huge flock of geese settle on the mud-flats for their mid-day rest. We decided to stalk them, and by dint of much patience, and making careful use of some dry irrigation-ditches, got within range. As the geese rose we let drive and knocked five birds out.

This feat, however, does not bear comparison with one I heard of the other day, when two guns knocked over eleven geese from a single flock.

Sometimes it is only by shooting over decoys or from blinds or some other such method that one can make a good bag of geese, but unless birds are really plentiful and one gets a shot every few minutes, these methods are liable to prove very dull.

In North China the commonest of the seven or eight species of wild geese that are known to occur are the bean-goose (*Anser segetum*) and its close relations the thick-billed goose (*A. serrirostris*) and the long-billed goose (*A. middendorffi*). Nearly all the flocks of geese one sees feeding on the great plains of the interior are composed of one or other of these species, two or more of which may even be found in the same flock.

To the casual observer, and even to the shooting man, who looks more closely, there will appear little to distinguish the members of these three species from one another, nor will they ever discover any differences so long as they look only at the plumage. It is in the shape of the bills, and the size of their bodies that the three birds differ.

If the bean goose (*A. segetum*) be taken as the common form and the others compared with it, it will be found that the thick-billed goose (*A. serrirostris*) as its name suggests has a thicker bill, which is further

characterized by having more pronounced serrations on the inner edges of the mandible. The bird itself is somewhat larger than the bean goose.

The long-billed goose (*A. middendorffi*) has a very long bill, and is beside very much larger than the other two species.

Every now and then the sportsman will have the luck to bring down a goose that scales somewhere in the region of eight to ten pounds, the average run of geese he has shot weighing from four to six or at best seven pounds. A look at the bill will settle the question, and he will be able to pride himself on having shot a *middendorffi*, which fact, if he likes to go round telling his friends will doubtless earn him many a scowl or at best a jeer. I know sportsmen who get positively angry if you tell them a bird's scientific name.

I remember seeing a nine pound *middendorffi* brought down one day on the Tai-yuan Fu plain, a plain, by the way, where one may enjoy some of the finest wild goose shooting imaginable.

Three of us—I always find it pays to work in threes, the fourth man is often *de trop*, while two invariably quarrel—had planned a little Saturday afternoon outing, and had reached the bank of the Fen Ho where the ferry-boats lie moored, when a huge flock of geese that must have numbered several hundred head, was noticed feeding on the garnered sorghum fields. We decided to stalk them as there was a suitable bank for the purpose that ran past the feeding and unsuspecting birds.

We tethered our ponies and set out, but had not gone far when something disturbed the geese, which flew up with a deafening thunder of wings and a din of cackle and honking that could be heard for miles. Crouching down we waited where we were as the huge flock broke up into the characteristic skeins and went circling off. As luck would have it, one skein passed over our heads within range, and we let drive. One goose only dropped out and came crashing down as dead as a stone into the river behind us. Of course we each claimed it and the matter was not settled till two days later when at the dinner table an AA pellet was found in the bird's heart, and the man who had used that particular size of shot was able to claim the honours. It was a monster bird and the native who retrieved it and carried it to the ponies seem-

ed to be fairly hidden by the terrific expanse of wing. When weighed it tipped the scale to just over 9 lbs.

A still larger goose was shot by Mr. H. E. Gibson, while on a houseboat trip last winter. This bird, a photograph of which is given, weighed $13\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. This must be a record for China, if not for the world. It falls to the lot of but few shooting men to get a goose even approaching this, most of us having to content ourselves with five or six pounders or when in luck with a seven pounder.

Wade gives the weight of the bean goose as $7\frac{1}{4}$ lbs. to $8\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. but he makes no mention of *middendorffi*.

The *Encyclopædia of Sport* gives the weight of the bean goose as from $7\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. to 8 lbs., stating that some have been killed weighing 9 lbs. In the same work the weight of the grey-lag goose (*Anser cinereus*) is given as from 8 lbs. to 10 lbs. The Chinese representative of this species is the grey goose (*A. rubrirostris*) and Wade gives its weight as the same as the home bird. As all the other geese are smaller than these species the importance of Mr. Gibsons $13\frac{1}{2}$ pounder may be realized.

On the Yang-tze the white-fronted goose (*A. albifrons*) and the lesser white-fronted goose (*A. erythropus*) appear to be fairly common. These birds must betake themselves to their breeding grounds in the far north by a route that follows the sea coast, or possibly they cross over from the Shantung Promontory to the Liao-tung Peninsula, or from the mouth of the Yang-tze to the Korean coast, for they are very seldom, if ever, seen in the environs of Tientsin, and I have not seen one in the interior. They are of common occurrence on the Yang-tze, where they often figure in the sportsman's bag.

These two birds are very like the bean goose in their plumage, but may at once be recognized by their white foreheads or faces.

A very rare goose that has been seen by a few Europeans on the Sino-Mongolian border to the north of this district is the snow goose (*A. hyperboreus*). This is a white bird with black wing feathers and pink beak and legs.

The swan goose (*A. cygnoides*) is also a rare goose found in China, while very occasionally the brent goose (*A. nigricans*) straggles over from Japan.



The banks of the Fen Ho, where the ferry-boats lie moored.



The native who retrieved it was fairly hidden by the terrific
expanse of wing.



CHAPTER X.

AFTER THE SHANSI BOAR.

Three summer days, through brake and dell,
Their whistling shafts successful flew;
And still, when dewy evening fell,
The quarry to their hut they drew.

—*Scott.*

AFTER THE SHANSI BOAR.



THE subject of wild-boar shooting is one of perennial interest to those who once get bitten with the fever of it. One finds that those of one's shooting friends who know the wilds of West Shansi and other pig country and have spent some of their holidays there, will never tire of discussing the sport, of comparing notes on the weights and measurements of boars they have shot, or of calling to mind scenes and incidents of the chase and exchanging yarns and reminiscences. I can always be sure of a pleasant hour's talk with Doc, for instance, whose bag of wild-pigs is close on fifty head. A grand theme draws us together in an unbreakable bond of sympathy and comradeship. We know the path of the hoary old tusker and his sounder of sleek-flanked rough-coated sows. We have tracked him to his lair or sought him where he digs his breakfast in the potato patch or barren hillside ere returning to his sunny slope or his cool valley-bottom for the day. We know his times and his seasons, and have looked upon his rugged, massive carcass and gleaming tusks, as he lies, stiff and cold, at the end of a hard days' run and gallant fight for life.

I wonder how many of my readers can share these feelings sufficiently to bear with me in the following account of a few days' wild boar hunting in the interior.

Imagine a rocky mountainous country, here and there wooded with pine or spruce, but for the most part covered with grass, low scrub or at best hazel-brush and scrub-oak some six to ten feet high. Every slope facing north lies deep in snow; the southern slopes are dry and warm, and offer a rich feeding ground for large bouquets of pheasants or coveys of bearded partridges. The valley-bottom, where the boulders

do not prevent it, and the lower portions of the slopes are cultivated for potatoes and oats, the only crops that can be grown at those altitudes.

Such were the scenes, and such the country that our party of three, Wilson & Co's Taipan, Ross of Jardine's and myself, visited early in the year in search of wild-pigs and other game.

We had devoted a couple of days to the pheasants and partridges with the most exhilarating success, when, at three in the afternoon of the third day, away down one of the main valleys, I came upon the fresh rootings of a large boar in a potato field. A coolie walked behind me with my rifle, and, being unable to resist the impulse, I decided to follow the trail, which could not have been more than eight hours old, and which lead from the rootings into a side ravine.

From previous experience I was sure we should find the boar across a ridge to our right, where deep chasms filled with scrub-oak afforded just the sort of cover wild-pigs love to lie up in.

Ross decided to accompany me and off we went. As I had expected, the trail lead up the side ravine, which being full of snow made tracking easy. It crossed a side ridge, meandered about the gentle slopes at the head of a second ravine and finally lead over the main ridge and down a steep incline on the other side into some thick scrub-oak.

Here we lost it, for there was no snow and tracking was difficult, but, knowing the habits of the pigs in this district, we commenced working along the main ridge, zigzagging up and down the steep and short rib-like side ridges and beating the brush as we went.

For some time our efforts in rolling boulders down through the scrub-oak and hazel yielded nothing, but presently as we topped a side ridge and looked down into a more than usually deep ravine, with a series of rocky cliffs at its head, we became aware of a fine boar walking up the slope opposite us.

[We opened fire at once as there was no time to lose and the range was easy. My bullet sent up a spurt of dust in front of the pig's nose: my companion's fell a little short. The frightened animal plunged



Photo by Dr. P. H. Atwood.

A bag of four pigs made by Dr. Atwood in West Shansi.



Bringing in the bag, Shensi.



first down hill and then began scrambling up again at a great pace. Again I fired but again my bullet fell to the right.

Looking at my rifle I found that the bearer had been tampering with the wind-gauge on the back sights,—an annoying habit Chinese bearers have. By the time I had adjusted the sights the pig had vanished. We saw him again on the top of the next ridge 500 yards away and then he was gone.

I skirted round the heads of the ravines, picked up the tracks and followed them for a long way, but night came on and I was forced to leave them. In any case it is doubtful if the pig stopped running before he had placed many miles between himself and the danger that threatened him.

That night the natives told us that we were in the wrong country for pigs, as the animals had moved off to another district on account of a plague that had overtaken them and thinned out their numbers terribly. Accordingly we packed our belongings and moved off to a better spot.

I regret to say that for the first four days in this new spot, though we saw pigs on three of them, we fared no better than before.

The first day the Taipan and I came upon a monster boar. He had been feeding on a sunny slope where the scrub-oak was thick and acorns abundant, when one of our guides who had gone ahead of us disturbed him. He did not go far, however, merely crossing into the next ravine, where we put him up half an hour later. My sights were on him as he stood below me in some rather tall oak trees, but no report answered the pressure of my finger. Like the veriest tyro I had forgotten to cock my rifle. Then I made another bad mistake for I took my eyes off the pig to see what was the matter instead of feeling, and, as might be expected, when I looked again I could not see the quarry. I searched and searched but it was hopeless. It was impossible to pick up his grey-brown form in that tangle of branches. Suddenly there was a rush and I saw my pig scampering away, nor could I drop him, though I fired a couple of rapid shots.

As he cleared the oak patch the Taipan's rifle rang out but the boar got clean away. Again I followed the trail for several miles but it was no use. The old fellow simply cleared out of the district. Two miles from where he had been shot at I measured his trail, and found that he was still taking eight foot bounds. He was a monster and we could have kicked ourselves for letting him get away.

Next day we sighted another big boar and laid our plans to get him, but while we were taking up our positions two more pigs were seen, and I decided to go after them, leaving the first pig to the Taipan. The first pig was crossing a wide valley and it only needed a little care and manœuvring to head him off and get an easy shot; so I left my friend to it.

Twenty minutes later, as I was on my way back from a fruitless chase of the two pigs I had gone after, I heard three shots; but on arriving at the spot soon became aware from my companion's language that his quarry had escaped. Missed clean at fifty yards! but that is usually the case if one elects to shoot wild-boar with a borrowed rifle which one has never tried before.

This was most unfortunate for the time was near for us to be going, but we decided on one more good try for the pigs. They had proved unusually scarce and our luck seemed to have been unusually bad; but surely it must change.

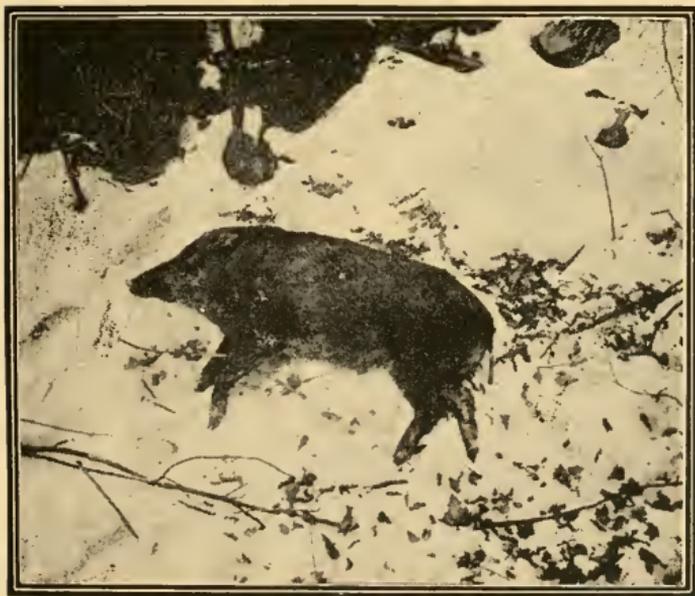
We were up betimes next day, and were soon on the pig grounds. We covered a wide stretch of country without any success. Ridge after ridge of likely looking oak scrub drew blank, except for roe-deer, of which the country seemed full.

At last at about three in the afternoon, there remained but one spot within a reasonable distance where pigs might be found, and this we decided to beat before giving it up and going back to camp.

It was a low peak from which radiated a number of short, steep ridges and deep ravines. We had worked nearly all round it without putting up anything, when I came across the fresh tracks of several pigs. I was ahead of the others, so waited to let them come up. The Taipan arrived with his beater, but Ross had followed a little way down



Fine pig country in West Shansi.



A Shansi pig shot by the author



the ridge we had just quitted, and could now be seen waving to us and pointing across to a spot further down the ridge we were on. Evidently he had seen something, and I guessed it to be the pigs whose trail I had just discovered.

Stealthily and with bated breath we followed the tracks down the ridge, expecting every moment to come upon our quarry.

The excitement of such a moment is intense. The nerves are strung up to a pitch that is almost painful and one can distinctly hear one's heart thumping against one's ribs.

We continued our advance, the Taipan close at my shoulder and the beaters bringing up the rear. Then it happened. As we came out of a copse I felt—that is the only term to use—the presence of pigs. Some inner sense told me they were there, yet look as I would I could not see them. Thus we stood, perhaps, thirty seconds; then I made out something. Was it the outline of the hinder part of a pig's back? Yes! surely it was! Then where were the others?

Not a sound was to be heard. Not a leaf or twig stirred. Again and again my gaze came back to that one spot, and at last I raised my rifle, drew a bead upon the place where I thought the pigs' heart should be and fired. A terrific squeal followed the report of my rifle, and as if by magic pigs burst into view all round us. There were snorts and grunts, the thud of scampering hoofs; clouds of dust rose into the air, obscuring everything and making it impossible to shoot.

The whole sounder of five pigs plunged down the steep slope to our left. Ross watching from the other side of the ravine, said, afterwards, it looked like a water-fall of pigs. Next minute we saw four fine pigs on the foot of the main slope on which Ross was standing, where the snow lay deep. They tore along appearing and disappearing as they crossed the rib-like side-ridges and intervening water-cuts.

Then, though the range was somewhat long, the Taipan and I opened fire. At my second shot a pig lurched forward, but recovering disappeared into a hollow. When it reappeared I fired again and had the satisfaction of seeing the animal stop, roll over and slide back into the hollow.

Simultaneously the Taipan who had hit one of the others let out a joyful yelp. He had seen his animal stagger and disappear just as mine had done; but he did not see it reappear.

Ross meanwhile had run full speed down his ridge in the hopes of intercepting the sounder, but he could not possibly compete with wild-pigs in a race over such ground, and they escaped him, without giving him the chance of a shot.

When the last of the badly frightened animals had disappeared we went down to gather in the bag. I had no difficulty in finding my two pigs which turned out to be a young boar and a fine big sow. A big boar, the leader, which Ross told us he had sat and watched, covering it a dozen times with his rifle, the while we approached the unsuspecting sounder, only to lose sight of it at the critical moment, had escaped. The Taipan's pig could not be found, and a good half hour was spent searching for it, before I picked up its trail and read in the snow what had happened. It must have received a bullet in the fleshy part of its stern, causing a bad limp in one hind leg, but not doing sufficient damages to stop the animal's mad flight. It had taken a course down the valley and away towards the west. A woodcutter, who had heard the firing, and came hurrying to the kill, said he had seen a pig with a bit of a limp going at a good pace in a westerly direction.

The day was far spent, and nobody felt inclined to follow the wounded animal: indeed, as it was, darkness came on long before we reached camp.

Well, the luck had been all mine, but my companions, despite their disappointment at not getting a pig each, seemed pleased enough with the result of our day's hunt. It was unfortunate that they could not stay out any longer, more unfortunate that the Taipan had lost his pig after actually hitting it, but what would you? The excitement had been theirs, the health that such a holiday alone can give was theirs, and theirs the memory of those glorious days in the wilds of that rugged mountainous country with its crisp and sparkling air and wonderful scenery.



An up country bag of pheasants, partridges, roe deer, wild pigs and leopard.



The country might be described as mountainous and wooded.



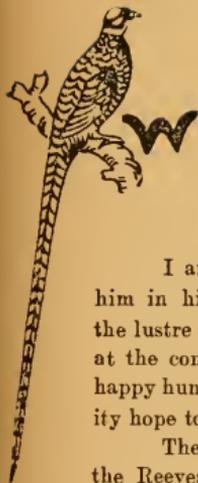
CHAPTER XI.

THE REEVES' PHEASANT.

Seek we yon glades, where the proud oak o'ertops
Wide-waving seas of birch and hazel copse,
Leaving between deserted isles of land,
Where stunted heath is patched with ruddy sand;
And lonely on the waste the yew is seen,
Or stragglng hollies spread a brighter green.

—*Scott*

THE REEVES' PHEASANT.



WITHOUT any doubt, in my mind, and, I should think, in the minds of any sportsmen who have seen the bird in his natural haunts, the Reeves' pheasant (*Syrnaticus reevesii*) is the finest, most handsome, and certainly one of the most sporting members of the great pheasant family.

I am not going to argue about the matter: one has but to see him in his native haunts, or to handle a fresh killed specimen ere the lustre and magnificence of its plumage has faded, to arrive instantly at the conclusion that there is nothing to equal him this side of those happy hunting grounds, to which some-day all we of the shooting fraternity hope to go.

The golden pheasant with his gaudy plumage looks bizarre beside the Reeves' pheasant, nor can he be considered either a sporting bird or a table delicacy.

Our handsome friend the ring-necked pheasant, the colours of whose rich plumage harmonize so beautifully with each other and their surroundings, lacks the magnificence of that five foot, silver-barred tail. He is a smaller bird, while his speed either on the ground or in the air is far short of that of the Reeves' pheasant.

The eared-pheasant (*Crossoptilon*) is a stupid bird compared with the Reeves', while the koklass (*Pucrasia*) living as he does on the rocky ridges of the summits of difficult and inaccessible mountains is too hard to get at, and offers altogether too tiresome and uncertain a shot ever to be a favourite with sportsmen.

But the Reeves' pheasant!—well, he combines magnificence of form and colour with weight and speed, at the same time occupying country where he is readily got at, in sufficient numbers to make it worth

a sportsman's while to go after him. His flesh is of the very finest quality, fine enough to satisfy even a gormand's palate. Though difficult to bring down, this fine bird offers a shot that is plain and straightforward. The trouble with him is his speed.

Let me describe this bird of mine.

Half as large again in the body as the common pheasant, the Reeves', on account of his long tail, measures from four to seven feet in length. The record length as far as I can gather seems to be that of a bird recorded by Wilson in "A Naturalist in Western China" which was 7 ft. 2 inches from tip to tip. As the head and body of the bird are about 14 inches, this means a length of tail of 6 ft.

The forehead is black, the black continuing above and below the eye and meeting on the nape. The crown and back of the head are white: there is a white patch immediately under the eye: the throat also is white, the white continuing round the neck to form a complete collar. Below this is a black ring and then commence the golden-yellow feathers of the lower neck, back and wing coverts. Every feather is edged with black or deep chestnut-brown, which gives them the appearance of scales. The golden-yellow feathers on the breast soon give place to a rich chestnut-brown, some of the feathers having white centres, and all being edged with black. On the flanks the white increases and the black diminishes toward the tail, the brown giving place to yellow-brown. The middle of the lower breast and belly is of a shiny black. The wing-feathers, excepting the long ones (primaries and secondaries) which are of a pale yellowish-brown and dull brown, are white, edged with black or chestnut-brown. The tail is the most beautiful thing imaginable. The margins of the feathers are a rich orange-brown, the middle portion is silver-grey, barred with black and chestnut-brown bands down the whole length, the bands getting broader and farther apart towards the tip.

It is the rich orange-yellow, old-gold and chestnut-brown colours, together with the handsome black and white markings and the long graceful tail that make this bird the superb creature that he is, and the sight of him alive, either flying swiftly through the bare brown woods or

against the dark blue-green of the pines or spruce, or running or scratching for food in the pure whiteness of the snow-filled ravines is one to remember.

The hen is of a rich, brown, rather well marked plumage. She has a shorter tail than her mate and is a good deal smaller, though not so small but that she compares favourably with a cock of the common pheasant.

The flesh of this bird, as far as my experience goes, is excellent. I found it superior to that of the common pheasant, though in this respect others who have tried it do not agree with me. Tientsin house-keepers may try the flesh of this bird for themselves, for it is sold in the market, chiefly in the French market, under the name of *Chih-chi*.

The Reeves' pheasant was first described by Gray from specimens sent home by John Reeves in 1832, though the species was apparently known before this.

Of the habits of this bird I can say but little from personal observation, though I should think from what I have seen of him, they agree very closely with those of the common pheasant. The species is gregarious and may be found in flocks, or perhaps we should call them "bouquets," of from ten to twenty birds, cocks and hens mixing more than is the case with the common pheasant. They feed upon acorns and other nuts that they find in the woods, besides berries and seeds of all kinds. When disturbed they will fly up into trees, where they are very hard to see, and according to the natives they roost in trees, a thing which the common pheasants in North China never do. The colouring of these birds is admirably adapted to their surroundings and I know of no species that can merge into the landscape so quickly and completely. The yellows and browns match the grass and dead oak-leaves, while the white patches simulate the snow, and the black or chestnut-brown markings the shadows of the grass and bush stems. Even on a snow-covered slope, with a few grass-stems breaking the surface, one of these birds by sitting perfectly still will escape the eye; while in the grass and leaves, where there is but little snow, a man may stand in the head of a small ravine with birds all round him, not twenty feet away, yet fail to see one.

I presume that during the breeding season the flocks break up, the hens finding suitable spots for their nests in the higher mountain valleys. What the eggs are like, or how many are laid, when the young are hatched and when fully fledged are questions I can not answer.

Except for an occasional cackle when flushed I did not hear any special call of this bird, such as those of the common or eared pheasants.

Hitherto all writers and authorities have given the range of this bird as Central and South China, the furthest north that it had been recorded being South Shensi.

Tientsinites, and the sportsmen of our northern treaty ports generally should be glad to know that the Reeves' pheasant is to be met with in the Imperial Hunting Grounds of North and Central Chihli. It was there that I made the acquaintance of this superb sporting bird, when, with two companions, I spent several strenuous days trying to make a bag.

The country we were in was what might be described as mountainous and wooded. High, steep and unusually rugged ranges, covered with pines and spruce, were flanked with low, gently sloping foothills, over which and into the wide flat valleys below spread woods of oak, elm, walnut, chestnut and poplar, interspersed with matted tangles of wild-vine and thick copses of thorn scrub, birch and hazel.

The valleys were filled with tall, yellow grass; while clear streams, frozen only in places, even during the cold North China winter, wound down their course. Here and there, where the sun's rays could not beat with their full force, the snow lay deep, especially in the side valleys and on the northern slopes of the hills and mountains.

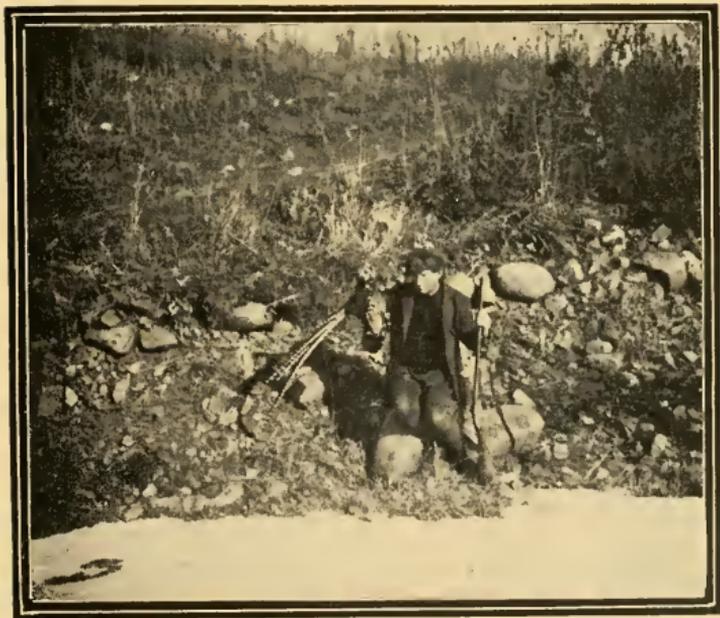
The cover in places was extremely thick and high, so that at times it was difficult to get through, but generally there were wood cutters paths to allow of easy passage.

It was 'mid surroundings such as these, and especially in the woods of the foothills, that we discovered the Reeves' pheasants in numbers sufficient for us to have made a really good bag, had we been able to hit the birds.

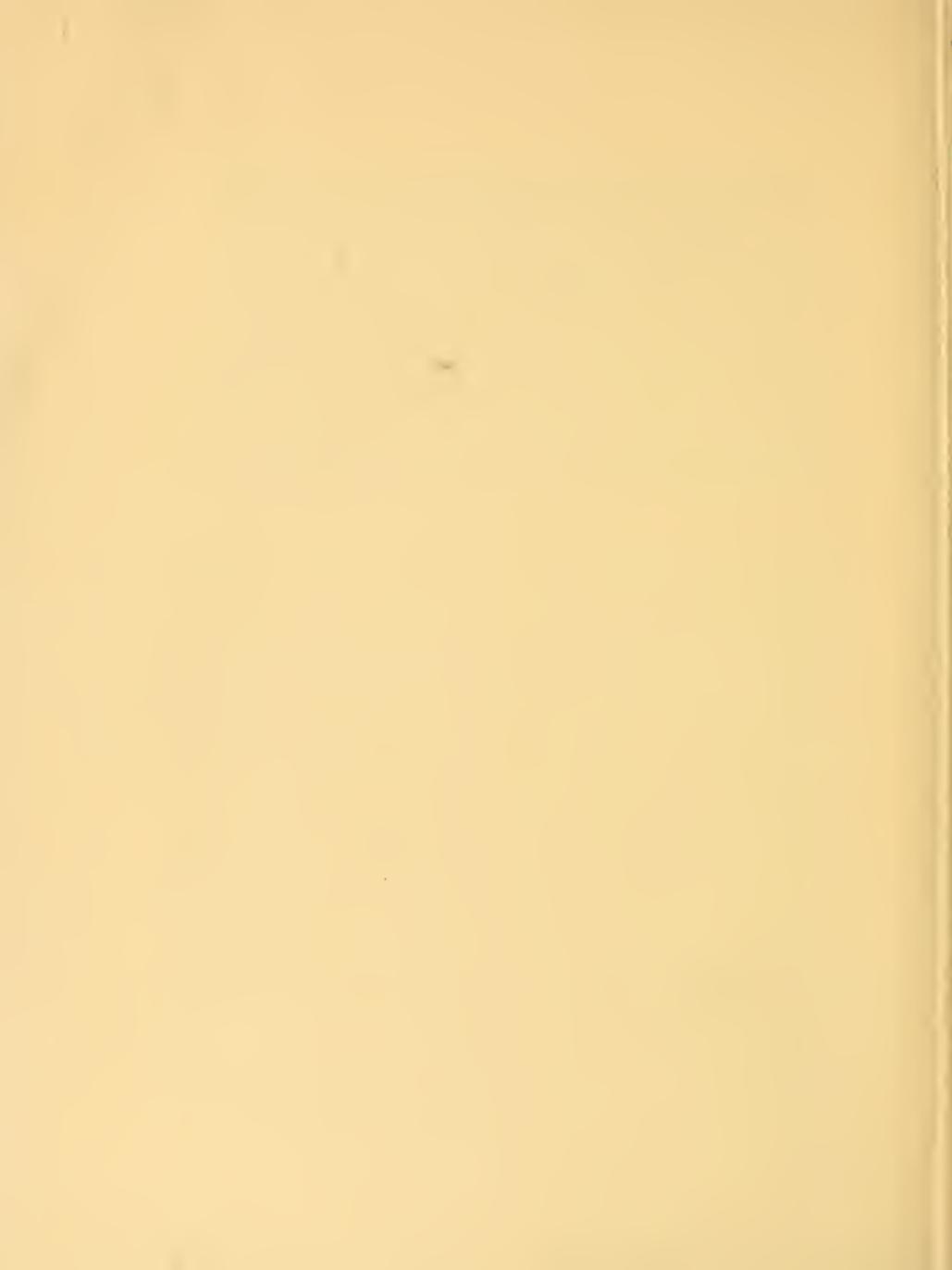
I ought not to have had any great difficulty in this, for I dropped a magnificent cock the very first time we came across them. My brother, who was one of the party, and I had started out from our camp after



Reeves' pheasant. (*Syrnaticus reevesii* Gray).



I was fortunate enough to bag a Reeves' pheasant.



breakfast one day, and soon found ourselves working from ridge to ridge of the foothills, when we came upon a flock of about twenty birds feeding in a narrow valley. It was from this flock that I bagged my bird as it rose with thunder of wings and made for the tall timber higher up the valley. It was a magnificent specimen measuring just over five feet in length.

We continued to pursue the flock, but, though we glimpsed it again and I managed to knock a few feathers out of one bird, we failed to bring down any more.

That night, when our companion, who was somewhat of a bird-shot, returned from a long tramp down the main valley with his two brace of hard won "ring-necks," we broke the news of our discovery, and, exhibiting my magnificent trophy, suggested another assault upon the fine birds on the morrow. To this he readily agreed.

We were at the spot in good time in the morning, and, as before, found the pheasants feeding. They made for some dense scrub where they hid till we came up, when they broke cover, offering the best possible shots. Not one bird was hit, however, to the unspeakable annoyance of everybody. We following them up the valley, getting a difficult long shot every now and again as they rose and skimmed off through the trees; but never a bird did we bag. At last we gave up the chase and returned to the main valley, where we spent the rest of the day after the humble, but more easily obtained "ring-necks."

Next day we tried in a different direction, and before long put up another flock of splendid Reeves' pheasants, this time fairly high up in the foothills. The result was no more satisfactory than before, for one of us hit a hen, which, however, made its escape in the dense brush.

So it continued. One day I had the chance of a life time. My brother was walking towards me down a valley, when he suddenly flushed six or seven fine cocks, which came straight past me within easy range. I had four successive shots, but missed every time. I shall never forget the sight of those birds coming, like arrows loosed from a bow, towards me. Their speed was terrific, far greater than that of the common pheasant.

It is to this fact that, to a certain extent, I attribute our inability to hit more of these birds. Another reason is that their long tail completely deceives one as to where to aim. One naturally aims to hit the middle of a moving target, which in the case of these birds is somewhere on the long tail. Add to this their unusual speed and it will readily be seen how unlikely it is for the inexperienced to give the right lead. Hence the misses.

We continued hunting in the district for several days, and at last one afternoon as it was getting late, I really thought I had reaped the reward of perseverance, for I caught a whole flock of about twenty of these birds at the head of a ravine, and flushed them before they could run out of range or over the top of the ridge, a trick, by the way, they are very fond of doing.

Up they got, one after another and my first right and left crumpled up two birds, a cock and a hen.

The hen fell I know not where; my eyes were on the cock, which I saw hit the bank with a thud, get up, shake himself and start off like mad up the slope. He was out of range, so I commenced running too. The bird gained the top of the ridge and vanished. Half a minute later I was there, as well, but not a sign of my bird anywhere. I got my beaters to come and beat the slope on the other side of the ridge, and at last the cock broke cover, and away he went again down the slope, one wing dragging in the snow. I fired two desperate shots in the hopes of stopping him, but he gained a fallen tree, and dived into a hollow under its upturn roots. There I found him, and I crept under the tangle of roots to secure my prize—but no! There was a scramble, a harsh cackle, I received a face full of dirt and the pheasant was off up the hill, leaving his beautiful tail feathers in my hand.

Before I could extricate myself and get my gun he was gone, and I never set eyes on him again. The hen, too, was never found though we spent an hour going over every inch of the first ravine where she had fallen.

On my way to camp that evening the reason for that long tail dawned on me. It is the same reason for the squirrel's long, bushy tail, and that is that a wild beast, making its spring at such a bird

or animal, does as the sportsman does until he learns better. He aims at the middle of the whole object, or in the case of the squirrel the most conspicuous part, and so gets the tail. This would not benefit the pheasant or the squirrel much were it not for the fact that in the case of the former the tail feathers come out so easily, and in the latter, the whole tail skins at a touch. Marvellous provision of nature! With all my boasted human intelligence I had made the mistake of the wild cat, and was left with only a tail to prove to my companions that I had really brought down another Reeves' pheasant.





CHAPTER XII.

A LEOPARD HUNT.

The Panther, sure the noblest, next the Hind,
And fairest creature of the spotted kind.

—*Dryden.*

A LEOPARD HUNT.



THE North China leopard, *Felis fontanieri* of Milne-Edwards, is one of the handsomest of the large cats known to naturalists. With his rich colouring and marking, and his long, soft coat, he far surpasses the Indian or African leopards. His cunning disposition that so often baffles the hunter, together with the fact that he is confined to the wilder and more out of the way districts, make him an animal well worth the sportsman's attention.

The species seems to have been first described by Milne-Edwards from specimens taken in the mountains near Peking, where, however, it is no longer of common occurrence.

It ranges westward to the Thibetan frontier and eastward into Manchuria, in the eastern part of which country it is replaced by a species named *Felis villosa*, which was described by Bonhote in 1903, from the Amur Bay, East Siberia.

Southward the range of *F. fontanieri* extends at least as far as the Yanz-tze valley, including the upper basin of that river.

So few Europeans have shot this magnificent animal that there are practically no measurements on record; but, judging from the large series of skins that come to this town for export, it would seem that the species is a large one, comparing favourably with that of India and exceeding in size the African form. Eight foot specimens are probably of common occurrence. Dr. Atwood of this port shot one that measured 7 ft. 3 in. and weighed 130 lbs. He has also shot two females which measured 6 ft. 2 inches each.

A specimen bought in Shansi, measured in the flesh well over seven feet and it was not considered a very large one by the natives.

The specimens secured by Dr. Atwood were shot in the Kuei-lin-ti district of West Shensi, than which no better country for leopards exists, unless it be the wilder parts of North Shensi, where several have recently been shot by the Americans engaged in the oil-boring operations.

As an example of the sort of sport one may expect when hunting in the leopard country the following account of the killing of a leopard on a trip, that has already been mentioned in this volume, when my old shooting companion Mr. R. K. Douglas, and a new friend Mr. W. W. G. Ross and myself made up the party.

For two days running we had been beating the deep valleys and rugged slopes of a certain wild area in West Shansi for wild pigs, though with little success. Several large boars had been seen and shot at, but luck had been persistently against us, and they had one and all escaped, without, so far as we could tell, even a scratch upon their thick shaggy hides.

The Taipan had decided to take a rest for half a day, as the work of beating through that heavy country, with its sheer and precipitous slopes, covered thickly with scrub, and, in places, buried beneath a pall of deep snow, had been particularly gruelling.

Ross and I had set out as usual after a hasty breakfast, and were working up a long ravine, when we crossed the track of a couple of leopards. They were very fresh and I remarked on this to my companion.

"Wish we could get a leopard," he said, "perhaps we shall!"

"No such luck" I replied, and that was just how I felt about it. During eight years of hunting in North China it had been my ambition to get a leopard. I had tried every method I could think of to secure one. Traps, poison, spring-guns had I tried without success. I had put out ground-bait in the form of live goats and sheep, and had shivered away long hours of the night, perched in some tree near by, in the hopes of getting a shot. On cold moonlight-nights, in the heart of winter and in the wildest country, I had gone out alone, spending hours scouring the chosen haunts of some leopard or other that I knew of, but all in vain.

Once by following the fresh track of a leopard that had been prowling about the village where I was staying with some shooting

friends, I put the brute up; but it was only a glimpse that I got of its fine yellow hide. It rose from my very feet, ran a yard or two, and then bounded over a high clump of bushes, and was gone ere I could draw a bead on it. How I rushed blindly through the brush in the hopes of seeing it again and getting in a shot. The fine animal doubled back up a slope and offered a shot to my companion further up the valley, but I never saw it again.

That was the only leopard I had seen up to the moment when this yarn begins, as Ross and I stood in the blue coldness of that deep mountain valley, and read the tale in the snow. A mother leopard and her half grown cub were out on the prowl for food; had, in fact, passed but an hour or two before; were perhaps somewhere in the very ravine we stood in, and yet nothing, not even my companion's splendid enthusiasm, could convince me that we had the ghost of a chance of even setting eyes on the brutes, much less of bagging one.

Too often had I been baffled and foiled; and I had reached that stage when my mind was made up that leopards were not for me. Others might get them. Raw, inexperienced tyros of my acquaintance had got them; but as far as I was concerned, Fate had decreed against me, and so I had long decided that I would waste no more time "bucking" Fate as our American friends would say. I would devote my time to other game, and if I came across a leopard! Well there was always such a chance, but I would no longer seek it!

"No Ross, we'll just go on after pigs," I said. "There isn't one chance in a thousand of our seeing the leopards, even if we follow the tracks all day," I continued, and with that we turned up a path that ran along a ridge, and made for a series of ravines filled with oak-scrub, where we might find a large boar that had been put up the day before.

I have described that West Shansi country before, with its rugged ranges, long, steep ridges, the sides of which are scarred with deep ravines. The low vegetation of thorn-scrub, and dwarf-oak, hazel and wild-rose though thick enough in most places, is not so thick but there are wide, bare or grass-covered patches. Here and there on the slopes that face north the vegetation is taller, and one finds birch copses and pine spinnies, sometimes extending into regular woods. Just now

the country was covered with a fresh fall of snow, which made the steep, bushy slopes particularly difficult to traverse, so Ross, who had injured his hand rather badly in a fall, decided to follow the tops of the ridges, where the wild-pigs have beaten out paths in the hazel-scrub wide enough to allow a man to walk with ease. I took a line from two to three hundred yards from the top of the mane-ridge, and worked along, winding in and out as I crossed the heads of ravines or side ridges and spurs. My beater, who carried my shotgun in case any very special bird or small mammal should appear, I set to beat the brush a hundred yards or more below me. In this way we scoured a good deal of country. As I topped each ridge, I could see my companion sitting away up at the head of the ravine, watching for anything that should appear; a capital arrangement in such country.

Thus we proceeded without putting up so much as a hare or a partridge. It was a glorious morning, the sun shining with its kindly warmth on the southern slopes, emphasized the chill of the northern slopes that lay in the cold blue-grey shadow.

Being fairly high up in the range we commanded a magnificent view of the surrounding country. Ridge after ridge of purple or blue mountains stretched away till their jagged outlines were lost in the azure sky.

I was admiring this scenery, and thinking of anything but the chase, when, suddenly, as I topped the third or fourth ridge I looked straight down upon a leopard that was crouching over a dead roebuck. Instantly the fine animal sprang away from her kill, but, instead of making off, crouched down some ten yards away and glared back at me. I was about fifty yards away, but could see her gleaming yellow eyes, and the hideous snarl on her savage face. Her fine, bushy tail waved from side to side in a display of anger. Here was my chance. I knew in a moment that the leopard was mine. The miracle had happened and I was going to shoot a leopard. All the experience of past disappointments came to me now, and instead of being excited and flustered I was as calm as if it were nothing more than a rabbit I was going to shoot. No rapid movements this time to startle my quarry and make her dash off at the critical moment. Slowly I raised my rifle, took a careful aim at the thick part



In the Imperial Hunting Grounds where leopards are plentiful.



A six foot leopard, shot by the Author.



of the crouching form and pressed the trigger. Up bounded the leopard four feet into the air giving out a terrific rumbling, snarling growl. She landed in exactly the spot she had left, biting savagely at her wounded side. I fired again.

It must be remembered she was down in the ravine where there was a fair amount of tall brush, with the result that when I glanced along the sights of my rifle my vision of the animal became blurred. My second bullet hit the stout limb of a tall thorn-bush, and continuing, with greatly reduced velocity took the leopard in the head.

Away she went down the valley, her hollow, growling roar filling the air as she went. Then came silence.

I called to Ross, who, as it happened, was standing just where he could not see what had taken place, that I had got a leopard, and he came scrambling down as best he could with his damaged hand.

As he approached there was a rustling in the ravine between us, and the half-grown cub, which I had completely forgotten came bounding past me, making off into the dense scrub of the next ravine before I could get my sights on it.

I went down to pick up the tracks of my wounded leopard, which were plain enough in the snow. A broad red trail showed that she was well hit. Ross and the two beaters having come up—it is not a very wise thing to follow a wounded leopard through thick cover alone—I commenced tracking our quarry down. The beaters showed considerable uneasiness and did not at all like the idea of being in the thick scrub, so I let them go up on the slope to keep a sharp look out.

Inside a quarter of a mile we came upon a spot where the savage brute had lain down, by which I knew that she was too badly hit to escape, so pressed on exultingly. A few yards further on I suddenly spotted her lying in the snow. She jumped up, but this time I had an uninterrupted vision, and bowled her over with a shot through the heart.

Above me Ross' warhoop rang out, as he made a fifty yard toboggan down the steep snow-clad slope, landing almost on top of the leopard, which was tearing the earth and crushing the bush-stems between her powerful jaws in her death struggles.

For my part I could scarcely believe I was not dreaming. It was one of those moments that one lives for, when the reward of days and weeks and even months of heart breaking toil is ours. Wait though! was it the reward of labour? Had I not given up going after leopards? Yes, it was just luck, a pure bit of luck, but who objects to such a bit of luck?

We sat and had lunch on the slope above the dead leopard, and it was a triumphant little procession that set out for camp that afternoon, the two beaters carrying the bag slung on a pole, my companion and I gladly carrying the lunch basket and spare guns. It was a jovial party of three that celebrated the killing that night at supper. Libation's to the Red Gods were poured, for at last the decree of Fate had been changed and I had got my leopard.



CHAPTER XIII.

NOTES ON THE CHUKAR AND
CHUKAR SHOOTING.

For the King of Israel is come out.....as when one doth hunt a partridge in the mountains.

—*The First Book of Samuel.*

NOTES ON THE CHUKAR AND CHUKAR SHOOTING.



OR those who have not made the acquaintance of the red-legged partridge or chukar, as he is more popularly known, there is a treat in store. With his delicate mauve-grey and buff plumage, his finely marked flanks—chestnut, black, buff and an occasional bluish tinge occurring in alternate bars: his black-ringed buff gorget, chestnut and grey tail and crimson bill and legs, this bird presents the most handsome appearance. In size he is half way between the pheasant and the little grey partridge, the cock bird being considerably larger than the hen.

None of the many game birds of China present greater possibilities of sport, provided always, the sportsman does not mind stiff climbing, than the chukar, for the home of this handsome little bird is in the foothills that border the great mountain ranges of the interior, or in the ranges themselves up to an altitude of 5,000 ft. His extraordinary running powers enable him to scuttle up a steep slope, rapidly outdistancing the fastest climber, nor, unless one knows something about his habits, can he be induced to fly.

The man who sets out to walk the chukar up is courting trouble, and will find himself, at the end of a deal of hard climbing, no nearer his quarry than when he started. Even a dog is of little use in putting up these birds, for they will invariably make their escape, when flushed by a dog, by getting up well out of range of the sportsman.

There are, however, ways of getting at chukar, so as to flush them within range. One of these is to use beaters, who are sent up to the head of a ravine or valley in which the birds are known to be hiding, to beat down the sides towards the mouth, where the guns are waiting.

This is the favourite method employed in the Himalayas. Captain Haughton of the 36th Sikhs, whom the sportsmen of this port will

remember, has given an excellent account of this sport in his book "Sport and Folklore in the Himalayas,"—a book, by the way, that lovers of sport and travel will find worth reading.

In China, where the valleys are neither as wide nor as deep as they are in the Himalayas, there is another, and, I think, a better way of shooting chukar.

Two sportsmen take each a side of a valley, and, keeping at a good height above the bottom, walk along, either towards the head or the mouth. If they have a few beaters, who work in a line above and below them, the chukar will be easily flushed, and, as they have a habit of crossing from one side of the valley to the other, will offer both guns the chance of a shot or two every time they are put up.

By this means good bags can be made without a great deal of trouble.

A third method, one that might be recommended to the sportsman shooting alone, is to get high up in the hills where the chukars are and work down upon them. Every ravine and water-cut hollow should be examined, for the wily birds have a way of hiding from the intruder upon their solitudes, and so exactly do they harmonise with their surroundings that they may readily be over-looked.

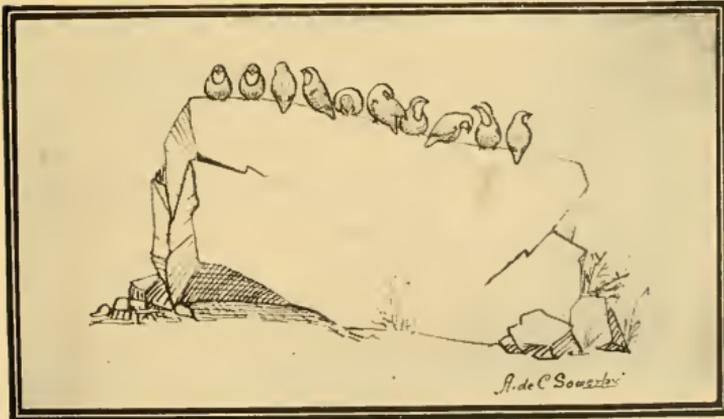
On account, also, of this faculty for merging into the landscape shot birds should always be marked down, and gathered in at once, especially if they have not been cleanly killed.

How to tell a well hit and dead bird as it falls through the air from a winged or leg-bit bird, is well worth knowing. Many a sportsman has thought his bird stone dead, because of its crumpled up appearance, and so has not bothered to retrieve it at once, and has ended by losing it altogether.

A dead bird falls with its head hanging down, or at least stretched out limply from the body. When a bird falls breast foremost with the head held close to the body, so that it does not appear at all, that bird is not dead and the sportsman would do well to make sure of it at once, especially if it be a partridge or a pheasant. As a rule a bird hit in the hind quarters does not come down quickly but flies or planes away to some far distant covert. Frequently a leg or both legs hang down, or



Typical West Shansi Leopard Country.



A row of chukars on a rock.



the bird sways from side to side as it flies. If time and circumstances allow it is usually as well to follow such a bird up, for not infrequently it will be found dead, or at least it may easily be secured as it gets up again.

The range of the chukar extends all over North China from the Thibetan border to the hills of Western and Southern Manchuria, and right into Inner Mongolia, where it is abundant on the outer slopes that fringe the Mongolian Plateau.

It is particularly plentiful in the *loess* country of Shansi, North Shensi and Kansu, where in many large areas it and the blue rockdove are the only sporting birds to be had.

Its familiar cry may often be heard as one travels along, when a careful search will reveal it, a little brown knob upon the edge of some sheer and towering cliff, or out upon some spur of loess.

The first chukar I ever got were spied thus from a main road in North Shansi. I could see the birds, four or five in number, away up against the sky, as they ran to and fro, or fought each other, stopping every now and then to shout their derisive challenge at the travellers on the road below.

By dint of considerable exertion I got within range and managed to bag a couple as they shot out over the cliff on their way across the valley.

Since that day, over ten years ago, it has been my good fortune to shoot chukar in many places, amid all sorts of surroundings and under varying conditions. Now it was a rainy day in the rock-strewn valley of one of the numerous streams that flow into the Yellow River in West Shansi or North Shensi. I remember one such day, when I came upon a row of ten chukar sitting along the ridge of a great boulder. I was tempted to take the lot as they sat with a single shot from my gun, but, I am glad to say, I refrained, and allowed them to scatter before shooting. Again it would be some desolate and rocky ridge, where there seemed scarcely cover enough for a mouse, when in their usual startling and abrupt way a whole covey of the little stone-grey birds would rocket up all round me.

Once while out in North Shansi some three years ago, with an American of congenial tastes, I enjoyed some excellent chukar shooting. The valleys were just right for the sport, and we used to work along, one on either side, driving the coveys back and forth, till they would escape over the top. In this district it was no uncommon thing to come upon large coveys of chukar feeding in the valley bottoms with the smaller bearded partridge and pheasants, so that we could make sure of a few birds whenever we chose to stroll out over the fields with a gun and a handful of cartridges.

This habit the chukar have of mixing with other birds is all the more remarkable since they are such quarrelsome fellows, and fight desperately amongst themselves.

The chukar mates in spring, the eggs being laid in May. The nest is very hard to find, usually being carefully hidden amongst the boulders and scanty scrub at the base of cliffs or in narrow ravines and gorges.

As with other birds of the family a large number of eggs are laid, sometimes as many as fifteen to twenty eggs being found in a nest. These are of a dull white or cream colour, a little larger than those of a pigeon.

The young are hatched in June, and are fully fledged by the end of August. They can fly while still quite small. I have seen them about half grown in July flying strongly with their parents.

Even from their earliest days they seem to know all about their protective colouring and when overtaken by an enemy will "freeze," thereby becoming an indistinguishable part of their surroundings.

On one occasion I surprised a mother chukar close to a main road. She immediately began simulating a bird with a broken wing. Knowing the dodge, I at once searched the ground all round, and sure enough was rewarded by finding some six or seven baby chukars—mere balls of yellow-grey fluff, mottled with darker markings.

It was extraordinary the way those small birds had hidden. One crouched down beside a stone, head down and neck stretched out along the ground; another was perfectly hidden under two thin blades of



Photo by Morgan Palmer, Esq.

Loess country of North Shensi where chukars are plentiful.

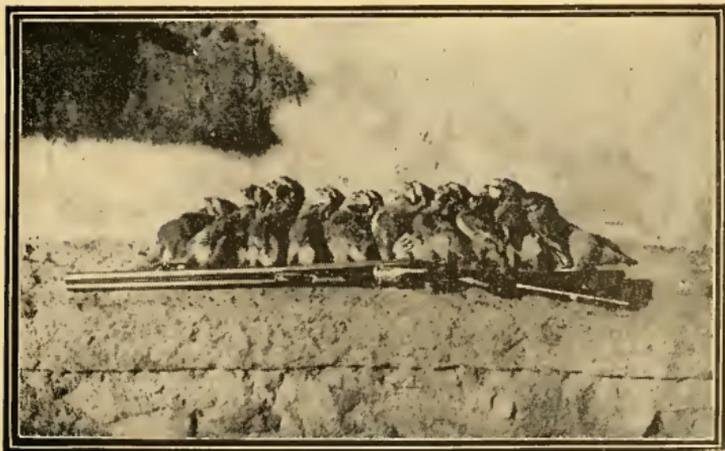
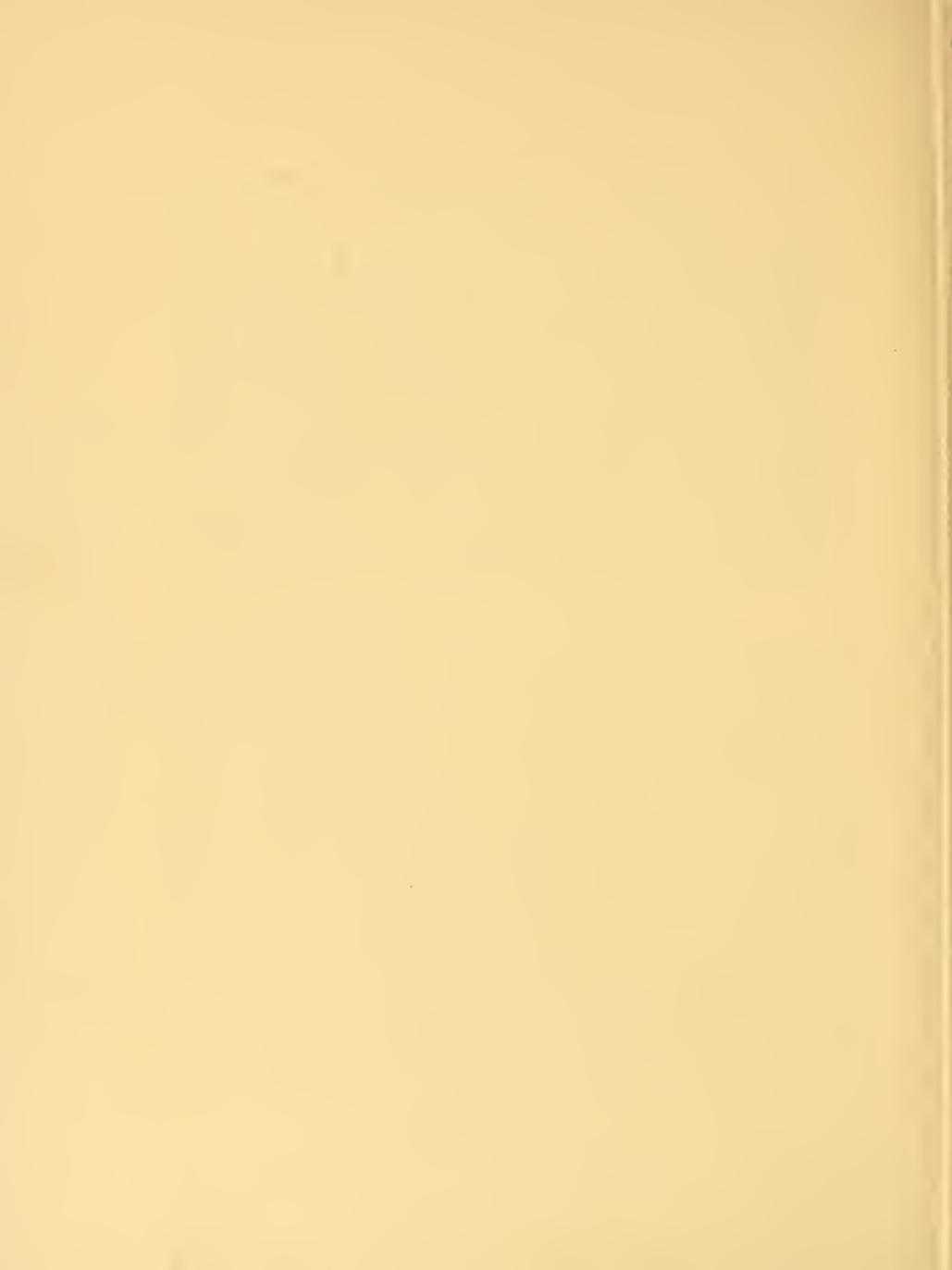


Photo by Captain T. Ho'comb.

A neat bag of ten chukars made in North Shensi.



grass, and so on. But what I should like to know, and I suppose the same question has crossed the minds of other shooting men, who get to know the birds and animals in their haunts, is, how did those baby birds know enough to keep still and so resemble their surroundings? Why did one crouch against a stone and another creep under a blade of grass? The one used and emphasized its outline in simulating a stone; the other broke the continuity of its outline by two blades of grass, yet both were perfectly hidden from any eye, save that of the trained human being, and both little birds seemed to know that they were hidden. Will instinct cover this, or did the mother bird teach them? Solve the riddle if you can; I can not. All one can do is to note the strange and wonderful provision of nature and marvel.

By September the chukar are full grown and ready for shooting. They keep in large coveys all the winter, splitting up into pairs again in the spring.

Their enemies are foxes, wild cats, martens, eagles, hawks and owls. They are hardy birds, surviving the coldest weather in winter, at the same time being able to withstand the fierce heat of summer. The shelterless barren ravines they occupy are exposed to the most intense heat, and often their water supplies are dried up, yet they thrive where other birds simply can not exist.

Their food is very varied. Grass seeds and such berries as may occur form their diet in the wilder parts; millet, wheat and other cereals where there is cultivation. In winter I have shot birds with their crops packed tight with moss—a poor enough diet on which to withstand the bitter cold of zero weather.

Chukar are amongst the strongest flyers in a strong flying family. They will carry a lot of shot, or is it that their thick shiny feathers deflect the pellets. Whichever it is they take a lot of killing.

One has to shoot straight and quickly to get them, and the best ammunition is not too strong for them. Altogether they may be considered extremely sporting birds, birds which it takes a strong and hard-working sportsman to get, even under the best and easiest conditions.

The name of the chukar that inhabits China is *Caccabis saxatilis pubescens* and was described by Swinhoe. The species differs, as far as the shooting man need be concerned, but little from the Indian and more westerly forms.



CHAPTER XIV.

STRAY SHOTS.

Enough! permit me now to sing
The art of killing birds on wing.

* * * * *

Full forty yards permit the bird to go,
The spreading gun will surer mischief sow,
But when too near the flying object is,
You certainly will mangle it or miss;
And if too far, you may so slightly wound,
To kill the bird, and yet not bring to ground.

* * * * *

Close neither eye—some good shots say,
Shut up your left: that's not my way;
But still a man may take his oath,
He'd better shut one eye than both."

—Watt (Quoted in "*The Dead Shot*").

When a bird comes directly in your face,
Contain your fire awhile, and let her pass,
Unless some trees behind you change the case;
If so, a little space above her head
Advance the muzzle, and you strike her dead.

* * * * *

But when the bird flies from you in a line,
With little care, I may pronounce her thine.

—Markland (Quoted in "*The Dead Shot*").

STRAY SHOTS.



SUPPOSE there is not one of us who have learnt the use of the "fowling piece" and with it the joys and pleasures that are inextricably mixed up with the chase of the feathered and other denizens of the wilderness, who can not remember that day of days when we tenderly handled our first gun, and set forth with beating heart to kill our first bird.

How easy, it seemed to our youthful mind, it must be to bring down a bird upon the wing. Perhaps we had seen some of our elders do so with precision and seeming ease, or if not, then we had most certainly conjured up scenes wherein we stood the central figure, with birds getting up all round or passing overhead, only to fall to our ready gun. With deft right-and-lefts and long cross shots we dealt "destruction 'mid the feathered train" and returned at last with heavy game-bag, the wonder and envy of all.

But how different was the reality, when a shot or two in the field soon dispelled those fancies of ours. Instead of hitting our birds we missed hopelessly, nor could we make out the reason for our misses. Just to find out if our gun shot where we aimed we let fly at some stationary object, possibly (with blushes let it be owned) at a sitting pheasant or partridge. Even these we missed, till at last there came the time when we were all but prepared to sell our gun and to swear off bird-shooting for ever.

That was precisely the moment when we needed some kind friend to present us with a copy of some such book as "The Dead Shot" or at least to direct our attentions to the large and varied literature on the subject; and it is according to whether we found such a friend through

whom the door of knowledge was opened to us, or continued to struggle on, learning only from our own bitter experience, that we have become good or indifferent shots.

When the beginner has reached the state of despair that I have just pictured there is only one course for him to follow, and that is to get hold of the right kind of book on shooting and read.

He will be amazed at all there is to learn upon the subject of bird shooting, but what is better still when next he goes out to shoot, having mastered in theory some of the principles involved, he will find that he can hit a bird or two. Home he comes delighted with, perhaps, a brace of partridges or a pheasant or it may be a wild duck or even a wild goose, according to the country he has been shooting over, and thenceforth he is an avowed devotee of "the art of killing birds on wing."

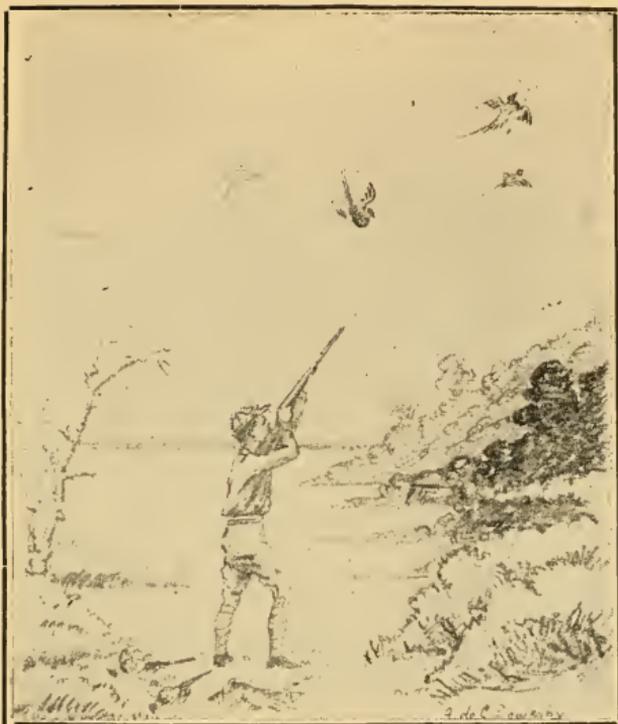
I do not here propose to go over all of the well known rules of shooting, though I may in passing mention some of them. This does not purport to teach the beginner how to shoot, for there are plenty of books that do that.

Perhaps, however, one who himself can never claim to be a 'dead shot' or, possibly, even a 'good shot,' yet who has had a deal of mixed shooting and varied experience under trying and unusual circumstances, may be permitted to set forth the results for the sake of other and better shots, with the hope that those experiences may be of use even to the elite.

In the course of a number of years of more or less continuous shooting it has been my privilege and pleasure to have the company of a good many fine shots on excursions into the country varying in duration from an afternoon to several weeks or even months. Strange though it may seem I have seen the best shots missing bird after bird, and naturally have sought the cause of it. Bit by bit the truth has come, sometimes from contemporary sporting magazines, sometimes by close questioning or experiment.

In my opinion one of the chief causes of these good shots missing as often as they do lies in the vagueries of the modern fast powders.

Two years ago I was afforded an excellent opportunity of observ-



With deft right-and-lefts we dealt destruction mid the feathered train!

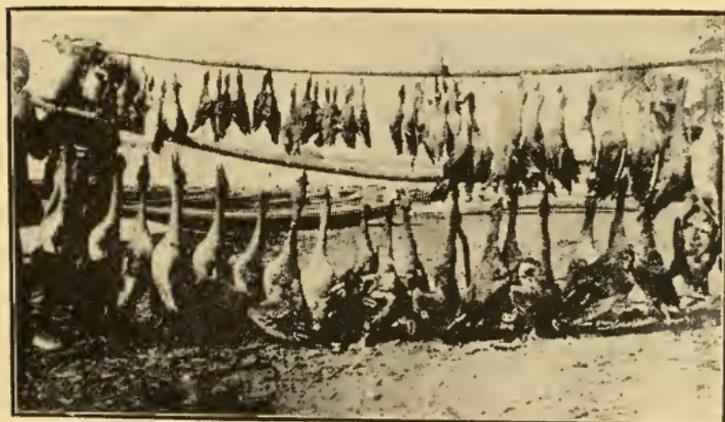


Photo by H. E. Gibson, Esq.

Bag of geese, duck and teal made by H. E. Gibson in two days on the Tai-ping marsh.



ing the effect of shot upon flying birds during a trip on which snipe formed the quarry.

I was using some cartridges with very powerful powder. So heavy was the kick caused by them that I got a bad gun finger as well as a nasty lump on my jaw. The worst of it was I was missing the birds,

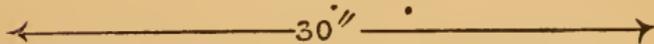
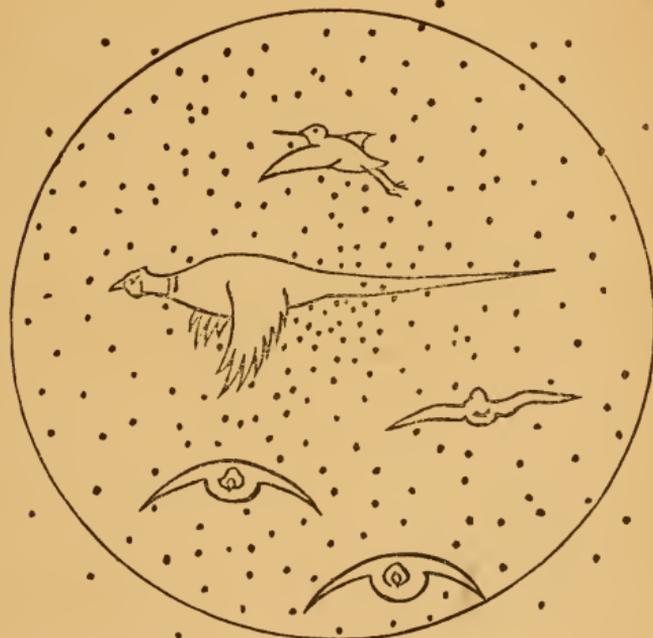


Diagram showing gaps in pattern caused by too rapid powder.

though I felt certain that my aim was not off; nor could I discover what was wrong till I came to the edge of a lagoon where the birds got up and skimmed away over the surface of the water. Then I discovered

that my aim was perfectly correct, for I could see that the birds were well within the pattern. Yet they were getting away seemingly unhit.

After some thought on the matter I came to the conclusion that there must be gaps in the pattern and that those gaps were somehow caused by the unusual force of the powder in the cartridges I was using.

A week or so later I found the very thing explained in *The Field* in an article, in which it was pointed out that the very fast powders now in use have a tendency to drive spears of gas through the shot, making gaps in the pattern through which birds even as large as pheasants might escape unhurt.

The accompanying diagram, though not taken from an actual pattern, is based on a couple of diagrams that appeared in *The Field* which showed conclusively how the best of shots might lose his bird through no fault of his own.

The obvious lesson from this is to avoid using too fast a powder. If the sportsman finds that the cartridges he is using kick badly, and that his shooting appears to have deteriorated, let him look for a brand of shell charged with something less powerful.

There are a number of good makes of cartridge that one could name, such as Eley's, Curtis and Harvey's Smokeless Diamond, Peters, U.M.C. or Winchester Repeating, in which the powder, though fast, is not too fast, as is the case with some others one could name. Ballistite is an excellent powder, and a very fast one to boot, but it is thought by some to be hard on the gun. Anyhow it gives a good pattern and hits hard, and I have used it for a number of seasons with satisfactory results.

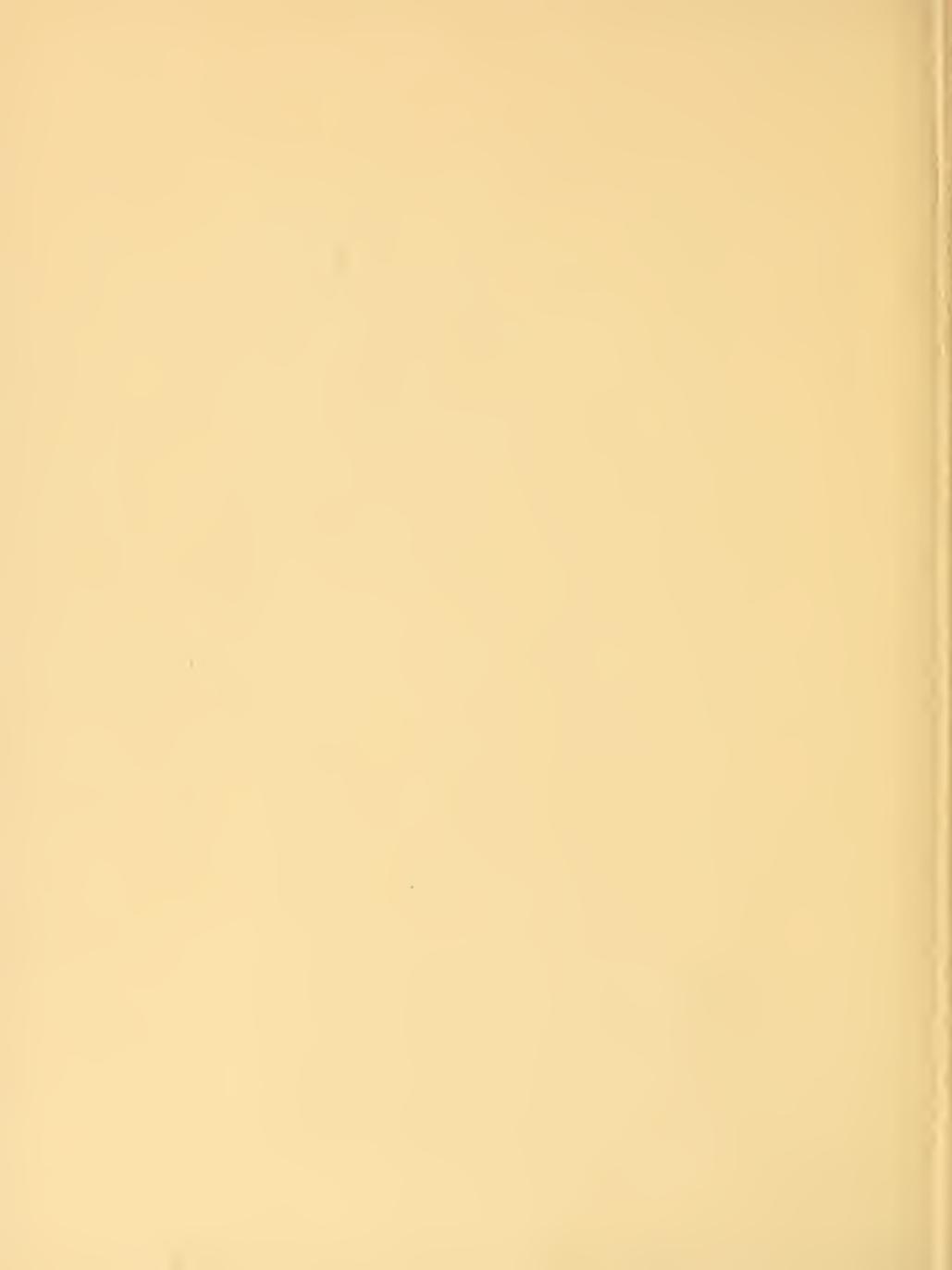
There are other causes why really good shots miss, sometimes quite frequently.

Take for instance the question of the speed at which various birds fly and the lead required to bring them to bag.

How many sportsman can say how fast a duck flies, and who can judge exactly how much lead to give in taking aim, so that they can carry out this most difficult form of shooting with any degree of certainty?



Wild geese in full flight.



Most men who have had experience in this will tell you that they give *about* so much lead at crossing or overhead birds, but ask them to specify exactly how many feet at a given range, and they will not be able to do so. The fact is they do not know, and their success if they have any, is due to instinct in allowing the right lead more than anything else.

This is evident from the fact that if one asks several sportsmen how much lead each gives at, say, a duck passing at 30 yards range, one will get as many different answers. Some will say a few inches, others a foot or two, others again five or six feet. Yet whatever they do, or think they do, one thing is certain, and that is that providing they are each using the same make and load of cartridge, the same size shot and the same length and gauge of barrel, in each case at the moment of discharge of the gun the barrel must be directed at a point somewhere within a given limited area at a certain definite distance ahead of the bird, if that bird is to be killed.

Each may arrive by a different method at the desired result, but that result is dependant upon a certain definite factor, namely the aim of the gun at the moment of its discharge.

With so many different methods to choose from, the beginner will doubtless find it difficult to do anything at all, but for beginners and old hands alike the more certain one can be of the required lead to give each particular bird the more likely one is to hit it.

The accompanying table has been made out at the suggestion and with the help of an engineering-sporting friend of mine with this end in view.

In this table it will be noticed the mean velocity of the shot for all ranges is taken. As a matter of fact the velocity is actually higher for the ranges under 35 yards (the muzzle velocity imparted to the shot by some powders is as much as 1200 ft. per second) and steadily decreases as the range increases: but in no case between the ranges of 20 yards and 50 yards does the difference in the velocity of the shot vary sufficiently to cause more than a few inches difference in the leads as indicated by

the table, which few inches are easily covered by the spread of the shot. The above figures may be taken in round numbers, the required fraction being added in the case of ranges over 35 yards and the odd fraction being deducted in the case of those under that distance.

For example take the first column: 7.33 ft. may be called 8 ft., 5.86 ft. may be called 6 ft., 4.40 ft. may be called 4 ft., and 2.93 ft. may be called 2 ft.

Table A.

If the mean velocity of the shot is 300 yards (900 ft.) per second then:—						
When the range of a bird crossing at right angles to a sportsman's line of vision is:—	the time required for the shot to travel that distance is:—	therefore the lead in feet required to bring the bird down when travelling at:—				
		30	40	50	80	120
		miles per hour is:—	miles per hour is:—	miles per hour is:—	miles per hour is:—	miles per hour is:—
50 yards	$\frac{1}{6}$ second	7.33	9.77	13.33	19.55	29.33
40 yards	$\frac{2}{15}$ second	5.86	7.82	9.77	15.64	23.46
30 yards	$\frac{1}{10}$ second	4.40	5.86	7.33	11.73	17.60
20 yards	$\frac{1}{5}$ second	2.93	3.91	4.88	7.82	11.73

Again some powders are faster than others, and therefore impart a greater velocity to the shot; but a velocity of 900 ft. per second will be found to be a fair average speed to go upon.

In any case there is always the spread of the shot to help compensate for these variations; though of course the "dead shot" is the man who gets his bird in the centre of the pattern, and that is what every one should try for.

It may be argued that the momentum of the swing of the gun imparted to the shot may do something to minimise the leads indicated by the table; but this is not so. By calculations, into which there is no need to go here, it may be shown that the greatest possible momentum that the swing can impart to the shot amounts to about three inches

when the range of the bird fired at is 30 yards, which momentum is negligible, and is probably entirely lost by reason of air resistance and gravitation.

There is a way, however, in which the swing of the gun may have the effect of *apparently* minimising the lead, and that is when the sportsman swings his gun rapidly up from behind the bird overtaking it and passing it without stopping the swing as he pulls the trigger. In this case the end of the barrel is apparently travelling so much faster than the bird that the fraction of a second required for the pressing of the trigger as or after the sights come into alignment allows the barrel to swing a certain distance ahead of the bird, thus making the lead that the sportsman is conscious of giving comparatively a small one, though in reality he has given the full lead that the speed of the bird and the velocity of the shot demand.

Naturally the sportsman who does this will tell you that he aims much less ahead of a bird than will another who is in the habit of stopping the swing or of jumping ahead to the right spot as he presses the trigger.

In the former case, the faster the bird is flying, the faster the gun will be swung to overtake and pass it, and therefore the farther ahead will the line of fire be directed at the moment of discharge.

The chief advantage of this method is that it eliminates to a large extent the necessity of judging the speed at which the bird is travelling and also the range. It further adjusts itself automatically to birds that are travelling obliquely away from the sportsman.

In the case of the sportsman who stops the swing the moment he reaches the spot where he considers he should aim, the fraction of a second during which he is pressing the trigger allows the bird to travel a certain distance, which he must allow for, thereby increasing the lead still more. This method is not to be recommended. If you must swing at all, then swing quickly, and continue to swing as you press the trigger.

The method known as snap shooting in which the hand and eye have been so trained as to work together automatically is strongly ad-

vocated by many of the best shots; but whether one consciously aims at the bird and then jumps ahead, or brings the gun up in one movement to the correct point ahead of the bird, or follows the bird up and passes it, there must always be a certain definite lead that is the right one.

We have seen the leads required for birds at various ranges travelling at various speeds. How are we to know the speeds at which different birds travel. In this, I fear, a lot has yet to be learned, but enough is already known to assist us considerably.

It is certain that members of the duck tribe fly very much faster than most birds, and I have heard it stated that teal have been timed to fly at the rate of 120 miles an hour under ordinary conditions, and as fast as 180 miles an hour with a strong wind behind them. These records, if they are authentic, must be rather exceptional even with such fast flyers as teal undoubtedly are.

I have searched in vain for such a thing as a table of speeds at which various birds fly under various conditions, though there are records of experiments in *The Field* on the speeds of pigeons, pheasants and partridges.

Some time ago I was able to form a good idea of the speed at which a bustard flies. It was on the Peking-Kalgan railway, and I was looking out of the window when I noticed a small flock of bustards get up and fly in a direction parallel with the train. For a minute or so they kept level and then slowly forged ahead. The train was travelling at about 30 miles an hour, so we may say that the bustards were doing a little over that rate; say 40 miles an hour.

Looking at our table it will be seen that to bring one of these birds down at 40 yards, (a good range for most birds) it would be necessary to give a lead of nearly 8 ft. Now a bustard's flight though seemingly laboured and slow is really very fast as compared with most birds. The birds I saw flying could not have been going at their full speed till they were ahead of the train, so it would be well to add a little more to the speed already estimated, and call it 45 to 50 miles an hour.

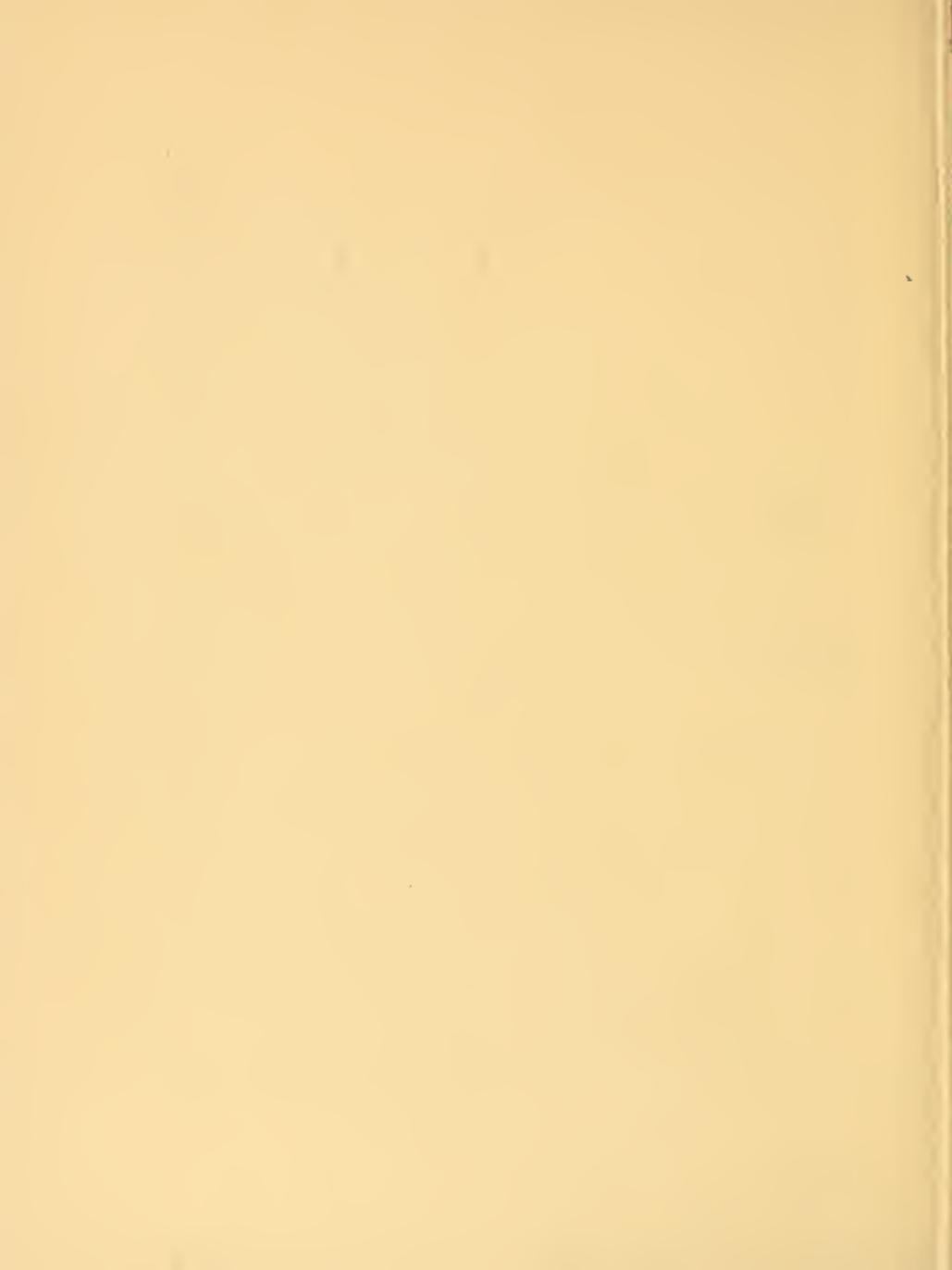
A wild-goose is a little faster than this. I have several times had



A difficult shot.



A river-thief on the prowl.



the opportunity of watching these birds from a train window and they have always pulled ahead easily. In my opinion we may consider the speed of a wild-goose when in full flight as about 50 miles an hour.

Ordinarily a wild-duck travels faster even than this, but by reason of the varied conditions under which shots are taken at these birds one has a number of speeds to reckon with. For instance a duck swooping down from a high long flight to its feeding ground is travelling very much faster than one that is merely flying a short distance from one feeding ground to another and is about to alight.

At the former a lead of anything up to 20 ft. is necessary, while two or three feet at 30 yards is all that is needed for the latter.

Another point about the speed of wild-ducks is that it varies with the species. Thus wild-duck shooting is one of the most difficult forms of sports and requires a lot of experience.

If, however, the reader ever comes across any definitely ascertained speeds of ducks in some publication, and can at the same time find out the exact velocity of the shot he is using, he may ascertain the exact lead in feet to give by means of the following simple calculation.

$$\frac{\text{range of bird in feet}}{\text{velocity of shot in feet.}} \times \frac{22}{15} \times \text{miles per hour at which the bird is travelling.}$$

In my opinion ducks in full flight travel from 60 to 70 miles an hour, and teal from 70 to 80. Next to duck, snipe and golden plover are about the fastest birds that we shoot at in these parts. In the case of snipe, however, the shooting is so different from other forms, that it concerns us here very little. With golden plover it is different. They generally appear in large flocks swooping past so quickly that one has time only to brown them. To get right into the brown, the flock at 30 yards should be lead by six or seven feet, which means that the birds are flying at 50 miles an hour at least.

Pheasants, partridges, pigeon and quail come next in this order.

According to experiments made by Mr. Griffith and recorded in *The Field* (Feb. 19th, 1887) the speed of a pheasant may reach 38.1 miles an hour and that of partridges 34.5 miles an hour.

Later authorities claim that driven birds such as grouse and partridges in the hilly districts of England and tall or high driven pheasants travel nearer 60 miles an hour. However, these speeds need not concern us out here, though owing to the strength and vigour of our wild game we may certainly place the speed of a pheasant at 40 miles an hour, and that of a partridge at 35.

From what I have seen of them I should say that the speed of a chukar when well on the wing exceeds these figures, and must be about 45 miles an hour.

A pigeon is given as travelling at 27 miles an hour, but the wild pigeons or rockdoves that one encounters out here are certainly faster than this. We may put them down as travelling at least 30 miles an hour.

A quail under ordinary circumstances can not be exceeding a rate of 25 miles an hour.

It is out of the question to make the necessary calculations in the field, so I have prepared the following table, which might be copied

Table B.

When the bird in full flight crossing at right angles is a :—	its speed is:	therefore at a range of :—				
		20 yds.	30 yds.	40 yds.	50 dys.	60 yds.
		the lead required is :—				
Teal	75 Miles an hour	7 ft.	10 ft.	14 ft.	18 ft	23 ft.
Duck	65 "	6 "	9 "	12 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	16 "	20 "
Goose	50 "	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	7 "	10 "	12 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	15 "
Golden Plover	50 "	" "	" "	" "	" "	" "
Bustard	45 "	4 "	6 "	9 "	11 "	13 "
Chukar	45 "	" "	" "	" "	" "	" "
Pheasant	40 "	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	5 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	7 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	10 "	11 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Partridge	35 "	3 "	5 "	6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	9 "	10 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Pigeon	30 "	2 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	4 "	5 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	8 "	9 "
Quail	25 "	2 "	3 "	4 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "	8 "

on to a card and carried on shooting trips as a guide. In making round numbers of the figures care has been taken to allow for various factors

that influence the calculations; so that these figures will be found to be approximately correct and comparatively reliable.

Of course the speed of any bird may be increased enormously when it has the wind with it; under which circumstance one must simply trust to instinct to guide one in giving the lead.

One point that even old hands need not mind being reminded of is that the shots are falling as they travel and that in these days when most guns are made with a very low rib dividing the barrels it is necessary to allow for this; that is to say, aim must be taken at a point several inches above the line of flight of the bird. According to "The Dead Shot" the drop in forty yards is about 4 inches and in sixty yards as much as 8 inches.

A good way of obviating this when aiming at a bird going away is to bring the gun up to and not to drop it upon the bird, as a good many men do who have a way of carrying their guns with muzzles pointed up in the air. The reason for this is that in doing the latter one is liable to shoot under the bird, while in the former the gun is liable to point above it, which is generally just what is wanted.

It is a fact that more misses are made by shooting under and behind a bird than any other way.

A very difficult shot for those who have not learnt the knack of it is that at a wild-goose passing overhead. The speed of the bird of course has a lot to do with it, but what makes it so difficult is that in bringing the barrels to bare at the right distance ahead of the bird the latter becomes hidden so that it is hard to tell just how far ahead one is aiming. This difficulty can only be overcome by practice, unless one takes to a single barrel gun when more of the bird may be seen.

Incidentally the lead, as our table shows, to give a wild-goose passing at 30 yards is about 7 feet. This may be reduced to 5 ft. if the bird is travelling against an ordinary wind; and to a foot or a foot and a half when the wings are extended and the bird is vol-plaining, as it were, previous to alighting.

Once mastered, however, flight-shooting at geese becomes almost automatic, unless one is seated in a small wobbly sampan or some other

untoward circumstance intervenes. Then it can become as difficult for the experienced shot as for the tyro.

It sometimes happens that a sportsman who once was a good shot somehow loses his skill and becomes an indifferent or even a very poor one. I had an experience of this kind the other day up country when I was shooting with a friend who at one time was quite a good shot, but who was at the time missing everything. He was very depressed about it, especially as we were in splendid pheasant country. After two or three days of it he was talking of giving up shooting altogether when the conversation turned on the question of eyesight. It then transpired that his left eye was his index or master eye. Also he admitted that he shot with both eyes open. This meant that when aiming his left eye was registering the position of the bird, but being unable to look along the barrels could never give the right aim; for when the ends of the barrels and the bird were brought into alignment by the left eye the barrels would actually be directed at a point to the left of the bird.

Under the circumstances there were two things for my friend to do, either to shut the left eye when shooting, and let the right eye, which in most people is the master eye, do the work, *i.e.* get the bird and sights into alignment, or else to shoot left handed so that he could get his left eye down far enough to glance properly along the barrels, and so get the correct alignment. He chose to try closing the left eye, and after a little practice was rewarded by bagging several pheasants in his old style.

Thus the advice often given to beginners to shoot with both eyes open may prove disastrous; though of course the permanent remedy for a left master-eye is a gun with the stock so made that the barrels come under the left eye. Such a gun can be obtained of any good British gunmaker.

In conclusion there is one further point I should like to dwell upon and that is the question of the sizes of shot favoured by sportsmen.

This is a knotty problem and one upon which most good bird shots entertain rather decided opinions. Which is better, larger or smaller shot?

Arguments may be brought up in favour of each. For instance it



In the case where the left eye (L. E.) is the master eye and both eyes are kept open, the ends of the barrels (G) when brought to bear on the bird (B) are in reality pointed to its left, (C).



In the case where the left eye (L. E.) is the master eye but is closed, or when the right eye (R. E.) is the master and both eyes are kept open the line of vision (A) and the direction (C) in which the barrels (G) are pointed are the same.

is argued, and rightly enough, that a heavier shot must have more force in it than a lighter one. It may also be argued that a smaller shot may get through the thick protection of feathers more easily than a larger one.

Both arguments are sound, but the one that seems to turn the scale in favour of smaller shot is that there are so many more of them, and in consequence the chance of a bird's being hit when they are used is so much the greater.

As a matter of fact smaller shot has fully as much killing power up to certain ranges as larger sizes have. It is only when one begins to shoot at fifty yards and over that the smaller sizes lose their killing power, so that it is a very good rule to have a smaller sized shot in the right and a larger one in the left barrel.

Amongst local sportsman sizes No. 8 and No. 9 and sometimes No. 6 are used for snipe. No. 4 and No. 5 are used for pheasants and duck, while for wild-geese No. 1, BB, and even S.S.G. are used.

Let the reader who cares to try it use No.10 for snipe, No.7 or No. 6 for pheasants, No. 6 to No. 4 for duck and No. 6 to No. 4 at medium ranges and not larger than No. 1 at long ranges for geese, and I promise him that he will bring down more birds than he did with the larger sizes.

I have just been out with a sportsman who used nothing but No. 6 shot at geese, while I was using No. 4 and No. 1. He beat me by 19 birds in two days shooting, which even allowing for my bad shooting and other unfavourable circumstances is pretty good evidence of the killing power and value of small shot.



CHAPTER XV.

A HOUSE-BOAT TRIP ON THE YANG-TZE.

Call to him, herons, as slowly you pass
To your roosts in the haunts of the exiled thrushes,
Sing him the song of the green morass,
And the tides that water the reeds and the rushes.

—*Longfellow.*

A HOUSE-BOAT TRIP ON THE YANG-TZE.



SO much of what has been written on shooting in China centres round the lower reaches of the Yang-tze, and of so exhaustive a characters is most of that writing, that one rather hesitates to add anything further to the literature upon the sport to be found in those far-famed regions, for fear of wearying the reader with what must almost inevitably prove to be a repetition of the experiences of abler writers.

Yet a house-boat trip on that mighty river, in the right season and company, is an experience that can not be lightly set aside. There must be many who are interested in sport and who may read these pages whose occupations or pleasures in life have failed to carry them into these happy hunting grounds, where fogs and mists and cold driving sleet, interspersed with days of incomparable sunshine and genial warmth, make up the sixteen odd weeks of the Mid-China shooting season. To these and even to those who know the Yang-tze at first hand the impressions of a Northerner may be of interest, and so I have dared to invade the realms of Bland and Wade with my halting pen.

Anyone who has read "House-boat Days in China" or "With Gun and House-boat on the Yang-tze" must have caught something of the wonderful charm of the life in the open, whether it be spent beating up pheasants from the reed-beds along the low banks of the rivers and innumerable creeks, or walking over dogs in the brush and scrub-oak of the hills that lie a little inland. Nor will he have failed to perceive that a house-boat is a *sine qua non* in Yang-tze shooting; unless, of course, one is bent on pig-driving in the higher hills and heavier cover of the Chinkiang district or other places that lie between that city and Nan-

king. Then a tent is what is wanted, unless the sportsman can bring himself to put up in a native hut.

But somehow the very thought of shooting on the Yang-tze presupposes a house-boat, and in this one's fancy is perfectly correct, for once you have left the North, and have passed into what may be called Eastern Mid-China, travel, excepting where there is a railway-line, must be done almost entirely by water. Particularly is this the case south of the great river. Here roads, such as we understand them in the North, are conspicuous by their absence, their places being taken by countless canals and creeks, built or dug, heaven alone knows how long ago or by whom, and carrying all the traffic—men and produce alike—of the land.

And a delightful way of travelling it is, especially for the sportsman, who by its means may get from place to place without the fatigue entailed when pack-mule or cart form the means of transport. Added to this so much more in the way of comforts, books, guns and ammunition may be taken on a house-boat trip than on a road-journey.

But, of course, there is little need to extol the pleasures and advantages of this mode of travel, when most Europeans in China, especially those of a sporting or adventurous temperament, have been on a house-boat trip at some time or other.

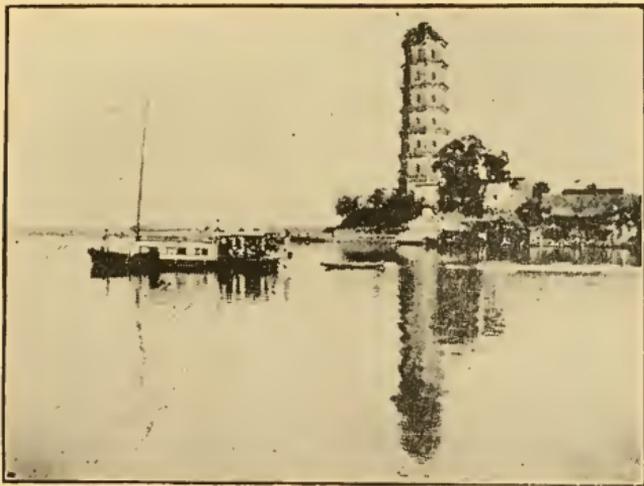
There is usually some little difficulty in the way of a North China sportsman getting good shooting on the Yang-tze; and this for a number of reasons. Chief of these is that unless accompanied by a local sportsman, by which I mean your sportsman from Shanghai or one of the Treaty Ports of the river itself, he will not know where the right spots are. Wade's maps will not help him much for the spots marked 'good shooting' on them are for the most part shot out now. Indeed, so much has the game of these parts diminished of late years that it is only some of the older hands who know where to get even medium sport. These, you will find, guard their secrets jealously, nor can you blame them, when it is considered how many shooting men there are now in Shanghai, who are only too eager to discover the good grounds, not to mention the wholesale exportation of game that has and is taking



My house-boat.



An Ichang junk.



Pagoda at the mouth of the Tai-ping River.



place from these regions. My readers will pardon me for again referring to this painful subject, but when one has walked for hours, day after day, through country that only a couple of years ago was thick with pheasants without putting up a single bird, one's feelings of disgust and resentment against the cause of it all may be excused.

It was with no little gratification that I received an invitation from my friend Mr. H. E. Gibson of the Shanghai Gun Club fame, who has shot over this country for the last fourteen or fifteen years and so may be considered as one of the "old hands," to accompany him on his annual shooting trip on the Yang-tze.

This fitted in with my work which was to make a collection of birds and mammals in this district, so everything was duly arranged for an excursion of a fortnight or three weeks' duration.

Gibson, whose house-boat, the *Maskenonge*, had been despatched to Nanking, there to await our arrival, was accompanied by his charming wife, and for once, let me state, the "eternal feminine" was not out of place on a house-boat, whatever may be the views of the general run of shooting men on the question.

As the *Maskenonge* was a little small for all our gear, dogs and servants, a native boat called a *hu-kuang-chuan* was engaged for me to sleep in and to carry my baggage. I was to take my meals and spend the day when we were on the move on the *Maskenonge*, which excellent arrangement was adhered to throughout the trip, and worked admirably.

Behold us, then, on a bright November afternoon, sitting comfortably at tea, as the *Maskenonge*, closely followed by the native boat, with broad white sails aslant, sped merrily up stream before a favourable wind.

With the lady's permission collars and ties were discarded, shaving tackle was cast into the limbo of forgotten things, rough field-shirts and jerseys were donned and we plunged into all the joys and unfettered ease of primitive man.

The first shooting place was reached that night and we anchored in a well sheltered spot—a very necessary precaution on a river where the wind is liable to get up at a moment's notice, and become a hurricane

strong enough the bump the bottom out of a house-boat that is unfortunate enough to get caught on an unsheltered shore.

Next morning we went ashore to see what we could get. There were some lagoons hidden in the dense reed-beds, which, so Gibson said, if we could discover, would offer us some fine duck shooting. Indeed, we could see flocks of both ducks and teal circling round and going down here and there, but try as we would we could not find a way into the desired spots. After wandering about for some time without much success we were about to return to the boats and continue up stream, when we came upon an ancient reed-cutter, who pointed down a narrow path in the reeds and whispered the one magic word *Ya-tze*. In we went and before long came to a lagoon, from whose surface a swarm of ducks rose. These circled for a little and then commenced to settle again, giving me a few minutes hot work, ere they were finally driven off. Unfortunately I was using up some old cartridges that I had had on hand a long time, with the result that though I hit a number of birds I secured only two, the rest falling into the reeds rather too far for me to mark them down or even flying away seemingly unhurt. My companion, strangely enough did not get a single shot at first as he had taken the other side of the lagoon and the ducks did not go near him.

When the last bird had gone away, we took up more favourable positions, and well hidden by the reeds awaited their return. Within a few minutes my companion's gun rang out, I heard the wop of a heavy bird hitting water, and a small flock of scaup ducks swished past me, a little out of range. Then for another few minutes silence reigned.

Again there was a report, followed by a couple of splashes, and then the whistling of teals' wings. I let drive into the flock and three birds fell out. One of these fluttered on to the end of the lagoon and escaped into the reeds. The other two lay for a minute stunned and then to my disgust commenced to swim for the opposite bank, where they too vanished into the reeds.

Next minute a flock of mergansers came in for a couple of shots from my companion, and I saw one detach itself from the others, circle and slowly settle fifty yards away in the reeds, where it too was lost.

Gibson's little pointer, Puppy, did trojan work retrieving several birds from the lagoon surface and even secured one or two that fell into the reeds, but we lost a number that could not be found.

During the intervals of waiting we had time to take stock of our surroundings. It was a delightful spot in its way. The giant reeds, standing from eighteen to twenty feet, formed for the most part a regular jungle all round us, through which a few paths ran in various directions. The ground, though wet and soggy, generally afforded a firm footing by reason of the tangle of reed-roots and green grass. The lagoon itself with its patches of yellow sedge, red duck-weed and withered lotus leaves and stems, its stretches of open water in which were reflected the reeds, tall and straight and graceful as bamboo in the mountains, together with the wonderful sky effects—orange, rose, mauve or blue, according as the hours of the day swung by, made a picture that would have set any artist's fingers itching to be at his palette and canvas.

At last we decided that we were ready for breakfast, and so, with our bag which owing to various mischances was not much to boast of, we returned to the house-boats.

In the afternoon we found some more lagoons, a whole chain of them, in fact; but did not do very well, owing chiefly to the denseness of the reeds. Even those birds that we dropped were lost.

We hung around till dark on the edge of one lagoon in the hopes of getting a good evening's flight-shooting, but, except for a couple of mallard drakes, which I managed to drop at long range, and which I was lucky enough to secure, mainly, through the good services of little Puppy, we got nothing.

The following morning we added another four brace to our bag, bringing it up to seventeen head. Though this was nothing very wonderful and we did better further on, the spot was one of the best at which we stopped on the whole trip, particularly for ducks of all kinds.

There were no pheasants, however, the place being too near to Nanking for them, but I could have spent a good many days there and enjoyed myself thoroughly, for I must confess to a preference for duck-shooting over pheasant or partridge shooting.

Besides, there was so much interesting animal life in the reed-beds of a kind new to me. My traps, which I had out during the two nights, yielded three species of field-mice. There was another little mouse that was comparatively plentiful. This was the Chinese harvest-mouse. This little animal makes for itself a loose nest of dry grass, lined with the soft, down-like fluff of the reed-tops. The nest is built from five to eight feet above the ground, so as to be well out of the way of floods. We found several that contained young, generally three or four in number, while once I closed my hand over a nest in which a full grown mouse was having a siesta. Several times we found the mother or father mouse "at home," but they were always too quick for us and made their escape either by running down the reed-stems or boldly jumping for the thick grass at our feet, where it was impossible to catch them.

The wet mud bore tracks of minks, badgers, civets, wild cats and river deer, but we did not actually see any of these interesting animals.

The bird-life, as might be expected, was confined mostly to aquatic forms, of which the majority were various species of duck and other wild-fowl, though such birds as starlings, mynas, buntings and finches might be seen at all times in large flocks.

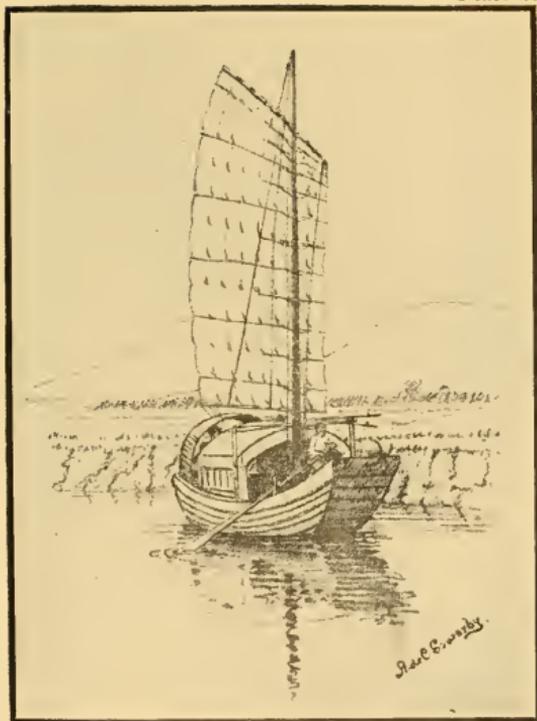
Though, as I have already said, I could have stayed on in this spot, our time was not unlimited, and my companion assured me that better country lay ahead, so after the second morning's shoot we cast off and set sail again, making good speed up stream.

The next place at which we stopped was called San-shan-shan (Lit. Three Hills Hills) which we reached early in the afternoon, and so were able to land and do a bit of shooting before dark.

Game proved to be very scarce. The hills, where pheasants had always been plentiful, yielded nothing, but when we reached the reed-beds again we found a few birds.

Three pheasants were grassed and bagged, also a couple of snipe.

Much to the excitement of the dogs, who, like most of their kind, always found the sight or smell of a river-deer sufficient cause to go into canine hysterics, one of these little animals was put up in a clump of reeds that were still standing. But alas! we were not to secure it. As



A native house-boat from Nanking.



so often happens at a critical moment like this, a worthy son of the soil, who was standing watching us from the top of an adjacent dyke, caught sight of the deer running through the low reeds at the end of the patch, and started shouting directions to me, as though I were not fully aware of its whereabouts, and only awaited a good, clear vision free from the cover and consequent danger of hitting one of the dogs, to take my shot. Of course the little animal doubled back and escaped on the side away from me, leaving me to ponder on the uncertainty of the chase, and the ubiquity of the genus *Homo sinensis*.

Yes, the omnipresent native—Lord of the soil, Bland calls him—of the whole Yang-tze Valley is a source of untold sorrow to the sportsman. Indeed for a Northerner, whose shooting has been enjoyed mostly in country where he does not have to keep ever on the alert for the eternal blue-coat, the Yang-tze shooting is disconcerting to say the least of it, while to a man of a nervous temperament it becomes positively distressing at times.

When one has to look carefully round before firing, for fear of hitting some unfortunate celestial cutting reeds or grass, or engaged in some other of the many occupations that carry the country folk abroad at all times of the day, one's shooting must inevitably suffer till one has grown accustomed to it.

And what trouble there is if the sportsman does happen to hit a native with a stray pellet! or if, as has often happened his dog worries a chicken or a pig!

From all accounts, too, the Yang-tze native when angered is a nasty customer, especially when he is in a mob and armed with the long-handled, keen-bladed reed-cutting knife.

But the man who dwells on these things is going to have his shooting-trip spoiled, so it behoves him to put them well at the back of his mind, but at the same time to keep a watchful eye in his head and to go cautiously.

This will not interfere very badly with his shooting, for his very cautiousness will result in a more thorough beating of the good and safe

spots, and consequently a greater number of birds flushed than would be the case were he to tramp at breakneck speed through the scrub and reeds regardless of consequences and shooting at everything that might be flushed.

There is another cause of apprehension for the Northerner in these parts, and that is the water-buffalo. An ugly fellow this especially when he raises his snout to get one's wind, and, with spreading horns sloping at a disconcerting angle over his back, commences his lumbering yet surprisingly fast trot in one's direction.

As a matter of fact he, or she, is generally harmless enough and a shout is sufficient to satisfy his curiosity and turn him off in another direction, but if he is on mischief bent the only thing to do is to "beat it" as the Americans say, which means to run away as fast as one's legs can carry one. It is no time for heroics or the power of the human eye when a water-buffalo is on the war-path.

After the episode of the deer, the memory of which has caused this digression from my narrative, we made our way back to the houseboat, and, as the place offered such poor sport, gave orders to the *lowdah*, before we turned in, to start at daybreak next morning.

This was done, and by noon we had reached a very nice spot called Wu-seng-keng, where we went ashore for some shooting.

Here we found pheasants more plentiful, and, I regret to say, I had my eye beautifully wiped by my companion, as two successive birds got up at my feet only to fall to his gun after a futile right-and-left at each from me.

Quails were very plentiful here and we picked up several couple, both now and on our return trip; but the best thing about the place was a series of long, narrow lagoons, where the most delightful duck flight-shooting was to be had. On this account we stayed out rather late, finally getting back to the boats sometime after dark much to the alarm of the lady of the party. However, we had a nice little bag of ducks, pheasants and quail to show for it so the lateness of the hour was excused.

One of the ducks that I bagged on that occasion will linger in my memory. It was one of a pair of Swinhoe's or yellow-nibs, that came

over my head. I dropped it, as I thought, dead at my feet with the right barrel and then turned and took its mate with the left. The second bird fell some little way behind me in the reeds and I was just going to retrieve it when I saw the first duck get up, shake itself, and start flapping out across the lagoon. I had lost so many birds this way that I determined to secure this one at all costs; so regardless of consequences gave chase. The bird was too near to me to shoot, yet I dared not let it go any distance for fear of its reaching some tall reeds that ran out into the lagoon, and towards which it was heading. I ran a few steps and almost overtook the duck, which, however, just managed to elude my grasp and next moment reached the reeds. In I went after it. In the gloom I could just make out the white on its wings, and plunged madly for the spot, but missed again as the wretched bird squirmed away. My foot caught in the tangle of under-growth and I went sprawling up to my neck—gun, cartridges and all—in the stagnant water. More determined than ever to secure my prize, I scrambled on on all fours and finally caught the duck, whose wing had become entangled in the reed stems.

My hands were bleeding from several nasty cuts, my knees were punctured, my cartridges sodden; moreover it had cost me the best part of the evening's flight, which never lasts very long; but I had got that duck, and so back to dry ground I waded, wet and chilled to the bone, but triumphant.

The following morning we left Wu-seng-keng in order to make all possible speed to some still better country further on.

Our bag up to date was 29 head, including ducks of various species, pheasants, quail and snipe—nothing very grand I admit; but we had had a splendid time getting it. After all the success of an outing is not always to be measured by the size of the bag. We had enjoyed plenty of good healthy exercise, we had had sufficient shooting to lend zest to our excursions abroad, and always there was the pleasure of being out in the country, so that during the next two and a half days, spent in slow progress against the stream and without the following wind that had favoured us hitherto, we were content to stay on the house-boat. We were bound for

the Tai-ping marsh, where Gibson promised me, the best sort of goose and teal shooting awaited us.

The dying down of the wind which had hitherto favoured us meant tracking where possible or using the *yulow* where tracking was out of the question, both of which means of progress are slow at the best. However, the time did not hang heavily on our hands, for we found a mutual interest in that we were both keen on water-colour sketching, with the result that ere long the walls of the *Maskenonge* were adorned with a series of paintings of ducks flying over the reed-tops at sunset, pheasants breaking cover or quail and snipe skimming away over the ploughed fields or swamps. It is wonderful how much a couple of fellows can learn from each other by working thus together, and drawing their subjects straight from nature.

On reaching the mouth of the Tai-ping River on whose banks the incient town of Tai-ping Fu stands, we left the main river and had a stiff time making way against the swift current. Just at the mouth of the river and on the southern side stands a picturesque pagoda, round whose base cluster a few temple buildings and houses, and beneath whose shadow river craft gather in the evening for company's sake and mutual protection against the lawless river-thieves that infest these parts.

Immigrants from the wilder parts of Northern Anhui, these river-thieves are a class in themselves. They can not be dignified by the name of pirates, for they seldom commit robbery with violence; but woe betide the unwatchful *loudah* who moors his boat in some lonely spot and falls into their hands. They are adepts at stripping a boat of all its ropes and other moveable gear while the crew is asleep, or at discovering and robbing the ground-lines, nets and other contrivances of honest fisherfolk.

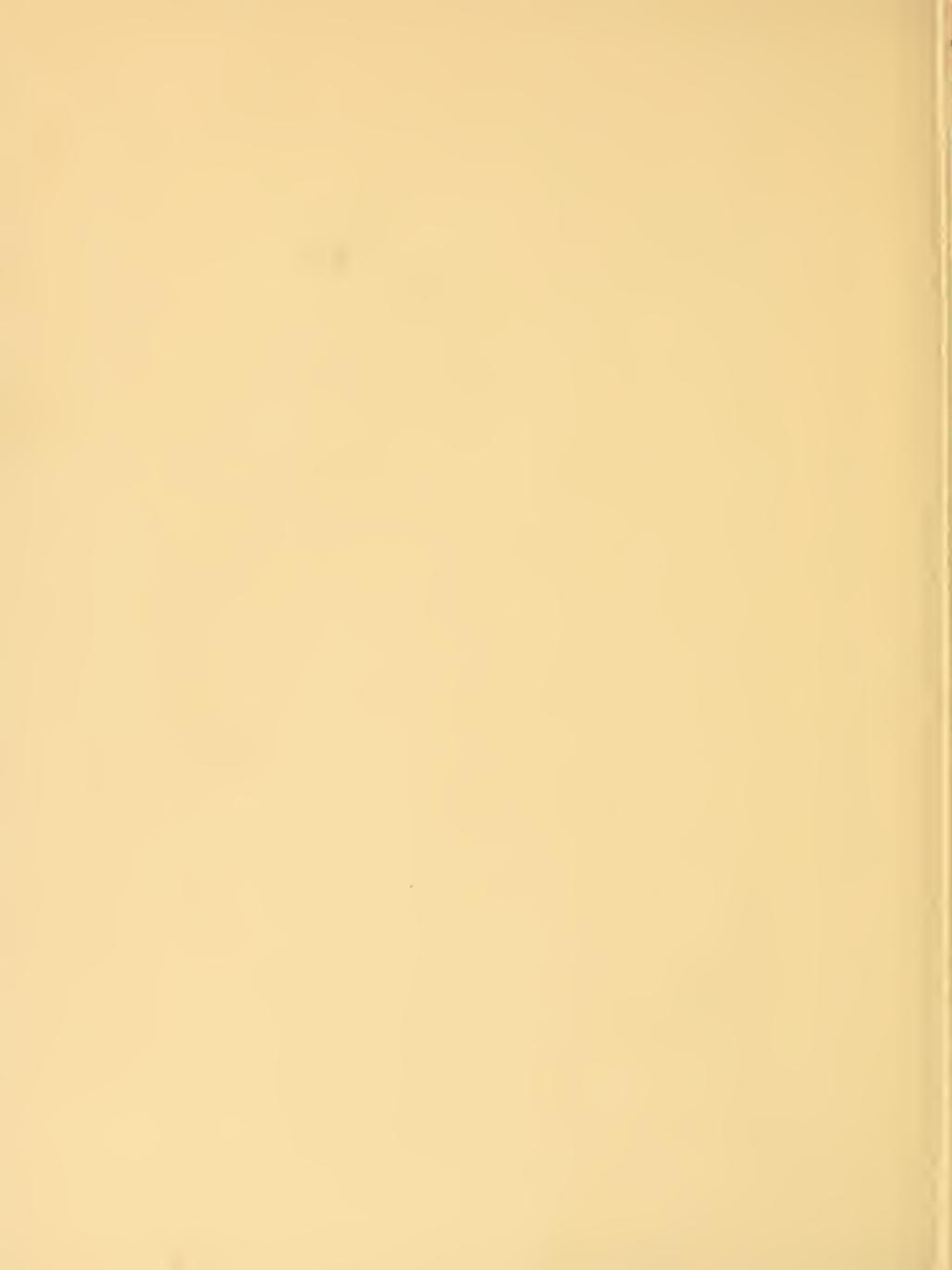
They live in families, one might almost say clans, in their long, low, evil-looking boats, and their home is where night finds them. When not thieving they indulge in fishing and other precarious ways of getting a living, and, naturally, are desperately poor.

We saw several floating colonies of these people, and one could not help comparing them with our own vagrant gypsies, the only differ-



W. G. S. 1875

Wild-geese resting at noon.



ence being that instead of wagons they live in boats. Certainly they were a villainous looking lot.

At Tai-ping Fu we pulled up for a couple of hours to take in supplies and then pushed on till evening found us on the edge of the great marsh that takes its name from the city. As it was late and there was nothing to be gained by going on we dropped anchor for the night.

A wonderful scene lay before us as we sat on the deck of the *Maskenonge* smoking our evening pipe of peace. The sun had set in a haze of red and gold. There was not a breath of wind, and the glassy water, with scarcely a ripple disturbing its surface, threw back the ruddy glow with an intensity that seemed almost unreal. Bars of deep brown mud or floating weed cut across the picture in long dark streaks, and

Behind them, marshes, seamed and crossed

With narrow creeks.....

stretched away to a row of purple hills, whose broad bases were already wrapped in the pearly grey of rising mists and miasmas from the swamps.

Away to our east could be heard the honking of innumerable geese, which, with the shrill whistling of teal and other water-fowl passing in bands overhead, gave promise of the splendid sport to come.

Heavy-winged herons flapped through the darkening sky, uttering their harsh, discordant cries as they sought their nesting places in the mighty elms of the higher grounds.

One by one the stars peeped out as the pink of the after-glow gave place first to purple and then to the deepest blue, till at last the constellations stood out in all their glory. Low on the eastern horizon was *Orion* mounting guard over the *Pleiades*—the “seven bright shiners” of our songs—lest one should lose itself in the infinity of space. There was the *Great Bear*, as yet scarcely discernable above the haze, and the *Little Bear* the tip of whose tail is the *Pole-star*, and there was *Polaris*, the *Pole-star*, itself, if you can see which you never need lose your direction. There were *Andromeda*, *Cassiopeia* and *Pegasus* all in their appointed places, and making us puny men wonder, almost, where we came into the scheme of things at all.

They make us think, do those silent, shining points of light scattered across the blue dome of heaven. They fill us with dumb yearnings to do something great, calling to us from boundless space and lifting us out of ourselves nearer to the great Creator. Yet even as they uplift the soul, they soothe the mind and body giving us the peace of the infinite. As we gazed in awe our conversation ceased; each became busy with his own thoughts till some one yawned and the spell was broken. Good-nights were said and we turned in to dream, perhaps, of

The silence, the shine an' the size
Of the 'igh, inexpressible skies.....

but more likely to sink into oblivion, the physical senses, as it were, overcome by the grandure and majesty of the Universe of which we form so small yet so important a part.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE TAI-PING MARSH.

Ghostly the wind comes shuddering through the sedge,
More pitiful than any lover's sigh,
As if in fear, over the dark world's edge,
The wild geese wing, in serried squadrons high.

—From Bland's "Houseboat Days in China."



THE TAI-PING MARSH.

IN the last chapter I tried to carry the reader with me up the Yang-tze River and its tributary the Tai-ping Ho to the margin of the great Tai-ping Marsh. I now propose to give some account of that wonderful place itself, of the wild-goose shooting we enjoyed there and of the various species of water-fowl we encountered during the three days that we spent in the vicinity.

The morning of November 21st broke fine and clear, too fine, Gibson said, for us to get the best goose shooting, for on days such as this the great birds love to sit out on the mud-flats or open water and sleep in the sun's genial warmth; while if they fly at all they keep at a considerable height, and so offer but a poor chance to the sportsman of bagging them.

Still there were plenty of other birds to be had, so that we could be certain of some sort of good shooting. The soft mud of the half-submerged banks that divided the creeks from the marsh itself, were sure to be sheltering snipe; while we could see, in the distance, that the wide stretches of sedge and yellow swamp-grass that littered the surface of the water were alive with duck and teal; so we ate our breakfast in high spirits as the boats were *yulowed* along the creek.

After breakfast we went ashore to see what we could get and before long had bagged enough snipe for lunch. Just as we were about to re-embark a lone goose came honking over my companion's head, and was neatly brought down with a somewhat long shot.

The sun was now rather too warm to allow of much tramping in the soft mud, so we remained on board the *Maskenonge* till we reached our destination at the end of the famous Derby Creek, in time for us to engage sanpans and coolies and set out for an afternoon's and evening's shooting.

We separated from each other, each taking a different direction across the marsh, so as not to interfere with each other's shooting.

To one accustomed to swamps and marshes and the conditions that prevail in such places, the Tai-ping Marsh nevertheless proved a surprise and a revelation, with its miles and miles of deep, clear water, its masses of floating weed and swamp-grass which made it look as though one could almost walk across it. Indeed here and there land actually showed, and this was always covered with reeds and the greenest of grass. Sometimes long low ridges ran for miles across the marsh, marking the place where some deeper channel had been cut for the passage of large boats; while in a few places there was but an inch or so, or at most a foot of water, enabling one to wade about in search of stray teal or ducks or possibly a snipe or two. But for the most part there were from six to ten feet of water. Looking down into its limpid depths one could see all manner of strange aquatic plants. There was one kind whose tufts of leaves were held to the oozy bottom by long spiral filamentous stems; another had all the appearance of a delicate fern with feathery fronds instead of leaves; while everywhere on and under the surface of the water were the round, flat leaves of water-lilies.

Dried lotus leaves with their prickly stems, and even the peculiar poppy-like seed pods, stood out above the surface, whereon the red duck-weed so characteristic of the district formed a thick scum-like growth.

It was the swamp-grass, however, with its thick, pithy leaves and stems, that formed the mass of the vegetation, and which the natives of the district came out in their narrow punts to cut and gather. I was told that it made a fine fertilizer for the over-taxed soil of the neighbouring farms.

One peculiar thing which I noticed in this marsh, and which I have not come across elsewhere, was the method employed by the natives in catching wild-fowl. This was done by means of series of hooks fastened to long lines and suspended at a height of about four feet from the surface of the marsh by means of thin bamboo rods. There were rows and rows of them, and they were placed in the favourite night feeding-grounds of the wild-fowl, the idea being, that as the birds came in at



Photo by H. E. Gibson, Esq.
White-fronted geese
(*Anser albifrons*.)

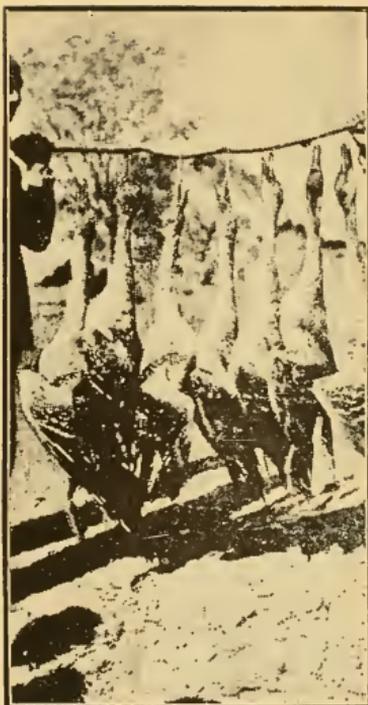


Photo by H. E. Gibson, Esq.
A bag of bean geese, long-billed
geese and thick-billed geese.



dusk or even after dark to feed, they would fly into the lines and get hooked.

It seemed to constitute a regular industry, if you can call such an occupation as hooking wild-ducks an industry, for these cruel snares were scattered in wide clusters all over the swamp.

Subsequently I came across a good many maimed birds that had evidently been caught by the hooks, but had succeeded in escaping. One of the geese I shot had half its beak torn off, and another had the web of one foot split open, while several teal had severe flesh wounds.

Early in the morning one could meet the fowlers returning with their night's takings of poor, crippled, suffering birds, usually about half-a-dozen or so, in the bottoms of their sanpans.

I found to my misfortune that where the snares were strung was considered by the natives as reserved ground, and when I started shooting there, they made such a fuss that I gave it up in disgust, for you can not shoot ducks with a mob of angry coolies hovering around and driving every bird away with their clamour.

However, by paddling about between the patches of swamp-grass, outside the forbidden areas, I was able to surprise and bag a good many ducks and teal, so that I had made a bag of thirteen birds before the evening goose-flight was due. Then as the first skein or two of geese passed I bethought myself of a long row of reeds I had noted earlier in the afternoon, and decided to take up my position in them and await the full flight.

Unfortunately, however, a series of hook-lines lay between me and the cover I sought to reach, and when I tried to cross to it, I was surrounded by some half-dozen angry fowlers, who made such a noise that all chance of any geese coming within range was destroyed. This was very annoying, as I had to get outside the reserved area again and take up a position with very poor cover in a thin clump of reeds, where I bagged only a couple of geese. Indeed I had had but the two shots when I was again disturbed by a small crowd of natives in sanpans, and so gave it up in disgust and returned to the houseboats. All the while I could hear my companion banging away a mile or so to the east of me, which was tantalizing to say the least of it.

Still I had enjoyed a good afternoon's shoot and finished up with a bag of five Swinhoe's ducks, eight teal and two geese.

I had not been on the deck of the *Maskenonge* more than a few minutes when a great flight of geese passed overhead, but they were too high for me to shoot.

Then followed one of the most wonderful things it has ever been my good fortune to see. There was a sound as of rushing water or the approach of heavy rain, which increased rapidly into a roar right above our heads. On looking up I beheld, as it were, a wave of teal, or rather wave upon wave of these birds flying rapidly towards the west. There were literally millions of them, and they were strung out in one stupendous flock composed of innumerable lesser flocks in which the birds were arranged in their characteristic skeins.

The main flock, one might better say army, stretched from horizon to horizon, and when directly overhead covered a good sixty degrees of the sky. As they were well out of shot-gun range the significance of this last fact may be understood.

The leading skeins maintained a wonderfully even line, and behind them came skein after skein, line after line, so close together that they practically formed a cloud.

The roar of their wings was deafening and reminded one of nothing so much as an express train passing at full speed through a station or tunnel.

My friends turned up half an hour later with eight geese, a teal and a Swinhoe's duck, much to my envy, for after all it was geese we wanted and had come for, and I had been robbed of my shooting by the jealousy of the local fowlers and the stupidity of my sanpan coolie in taking me where he should have known that I would not be welcome. Still we had not done so badly, and after a refreshing cup of tea and with the anticipation of a good dinner to come I soon felt myself again.

Next day we were up betimes and after a hasty breakfast set out once more. I made no mistake about my shooting ground this time, but headed straight for the reed-belt. Here I took up a position, well hidden

from view and awaited developments. But somehow my luck was out and the geese would not give me the shots I prayed for. They kept persistently out of range, passing to right or left. If they did pass overhead they were usually too high, though I tried several shots at them. At last a flock of big fellows passed within range and I made a nice right-and-left, bringing down two beauties.

One of these dropped behind a row of reeds where I could not see it, but I noticed a man, who was herding some tame ducks not far away, hurrying to the spot in his sanpan. We retrieved the first goose and then set out as fast as we could go to secure the second, but on rounding the clump of reeds could not see it anywhere. It had mysteriously disappeared, while the man was quietly punting his sanpan away. I asked him if he had seen my goose, but he denied any knowledge of its whereabouts. I was just about to turn back and continue what seemed to be a rather hopeless search in the swamp-grass, when there was a sudden fluttering of great wings, and behold my goose came floundering out of the man's sanpan. My remarks to the thief were I fear, somewhat severe and very much to the point, and I felt like driving them home with a dose of bird-shot, but of course such a proceeding was out of the question.

My companions told me, afterwards, that they were considerably hampered in the same way, for, every time they dropped a goose, they had to race three or four sanpans to secure it, and once or twice had birds stolen from under their very noses.

As no more geese seemed likely to come my way I returned to the boats, where I found my companions awaiting tiffin. They had a bag of thirteen teal and five geese of which they were justly proud.

After lunch we set out again for our stations to get the afternoon's flight. As in the morning, the geese, as far as I was concerned, kept tantalizingly out of range, though the sound of frequent firing from across the water told me that Gibson was having a good time.

I must confess, however, that I was burning a bit of powder myself, but it was always at birds at very long ranges. For all the good I did I might just as well have sat in my sampan and read a book.

As a matter of fact I got out my pencil and sketch-block and made studies of the geese as they flew over-head or sat on a mud-bank some distance away, where I could see them plainly but could not reach them.

As the afternoon wore on the geese seemed to fly a little lower, till I thought I must surely be able to bring one down; but try as I would I could not hit one. At last I remembered my little formula for finding the correct lead to give a bird flying overhead or passing in a line at right angles to one's line of vision, and sitting down I applied it forthwith to the present situation.

Taking the speed of my shot as 900 ft. per second and that of the bird's flight as 50 miles an hour and their range as 40 yards or 120 feet thus:—

$$\frac{120}{900} \times \frac{22}{15} \times 50 = 9.77$$

I got the result of nearly ten feet! No wonder I was missing for I was allowing only three! The very next skein of geese that came over I led by fully ten feet, and to my delight down came a fine fat seven pounder. "Now," thought I, "I shall make a bag," and forthwith settled down to business. But it was not to be, for the flights were practically over, as it was getting late in the afternoon. The most I could hope for would be a goose or two out of the big evening flight, which should take place at about six o'clock, and in which all the geese of the district would take part, joining together in one stupendous army.

Sure enough! at the appointed hour the far away honking of the birds was heard. Steadily the noise increased, and I could see them coming, line upon line, stretching clear across the eastern horizon. It was a wonderful sight. On they came, every bird calling to his mates, their multitudinous voices filling the air.

Suddenly one end of the serried ranks was thrown into violent confusion, the cackle and din increased and I heard five successive shots ring out as my companion's automatic got in its deadly work. Then the lines straightened out again and came on once more.

Almost before I realized it the vanguard was overhead and had passed and the main body was upon me. I chose a skein of big old

honkers and let drive right and left. Two birds fell out and came crashing down. I reloaded as fast as I could and let drive again. Down came two more birds, but in the excitement I forgot I was standing in a wobbly little sanpan, and so lost my balance as I swung for the second shot, nearly throwing myself into the swamp and half-filling the boat with water, while my shots went harmlessly into space.

Before I could load again the last skein had passed out of range, and the evening's flight was over.

I spent some little time looking for the geese I had dropped, and finally secured only three of them.

Then came the great flight of teal that I had seen the evening before, but this was out of range. It was followed by several lesser flights, one of which passing within range gave me the chance of securing a couple of the fat little birds. Next a single spectacled teal passed and was bagged, and finally with a last quick shot, taken just as it was getting too dark to see, I knocked out of a flock of five birds a fine big Swinhoe's duck, which hit the water with a terrific splash and was successfully retrieved.

This wound up the shoot, and we paddled back to the houseboats in the dark, with only the last tinge of pink in the western sky and the stars to light us.

My companions reached the boats a few minutes after I did, and proudly laid out a bag of eight geese, six teal and a Swinhoe. I could not help feeling a little chagrin at being so badly beaten, but took comfort from the facts that, not only was this particular form of shooting new to me, but my companion was admittedly one of the crack shots of the China coast.

The day's bag contained some magnificent birds. We had each secured a ten pound goose, and there were besides a nine pounder and two or three eight pounders.

The following morning we went out once more, but the weather was altogether too warm. I scarcely got a shot the whole morning, and finally returned for lunch with half-a-dozen teal. Gibson managed to get another five geese, thirteen teal and a duck, which brought his

bag for the 48 hours since we had commenced shooting on the marsh up to 62 head. I was a long way behind with exactly half that number.

As my companions felt that they ought to be returning to Shanghai, it was decided not to stay in the district any longer, so we paid off our sanpan coolies, and after photographing the bag, commenced our homeward journey.

Well, it had been a delightful experience, and I for one had certainly enjoyed it immensely, for as I have already said, the particular kind of shooting which we had had was new to me. The goose flight-shooting I had found as difficult as any I had yet attempted, particularly when it came to dead overhead shots.

Though I had taken every opportunity of getting some sport I had not forgotten my collection, for various interesting specimens were added to it, and my taxidermist was kept busy all day. Still there was not very much to collect in such a place, beyond the wild-fowl and a few aquatic birds.

I made the following notes upon the geese and ducks shot upon the trip, which may prove of interest to my readers.

We secured four different species of wild-geese, namely:—

The Bean Goose (*Anser segetum* Gm.)

The Long-billed Goose (*A. middendorffi* Severtzoff.)

The Thick-billed Goose (*A. serrirostris* Gould.)

The White-fronted Goose (*A. albifrons* Gm.)

Of these the first three, as has been stated elsewhere, are very much alike in their plumage, but they vary in size and in the shape and measurements of their beaks.

The bean goose has a small bill, while the long-billed goose has a very long powerful one, and that of the thick-billed goose, as the name suggests, is thick and heavy, though about the same length as in the bean goose.

We found that the heaviest specimens were of the long-billed species, the thick-billed form, of which only one specimen was secured, coming next, and the bean goose last.

The following measurements and weights were taken.

1. A long-billed goose shot by Gibson.

Length of head and body	3 ft. 2¼ in.
Spread of wings	5 ft. 8½ in.
Length of bill	80 m.m.
Weight	10 lbs.
2. A long-billed goose shot by Sowerby.

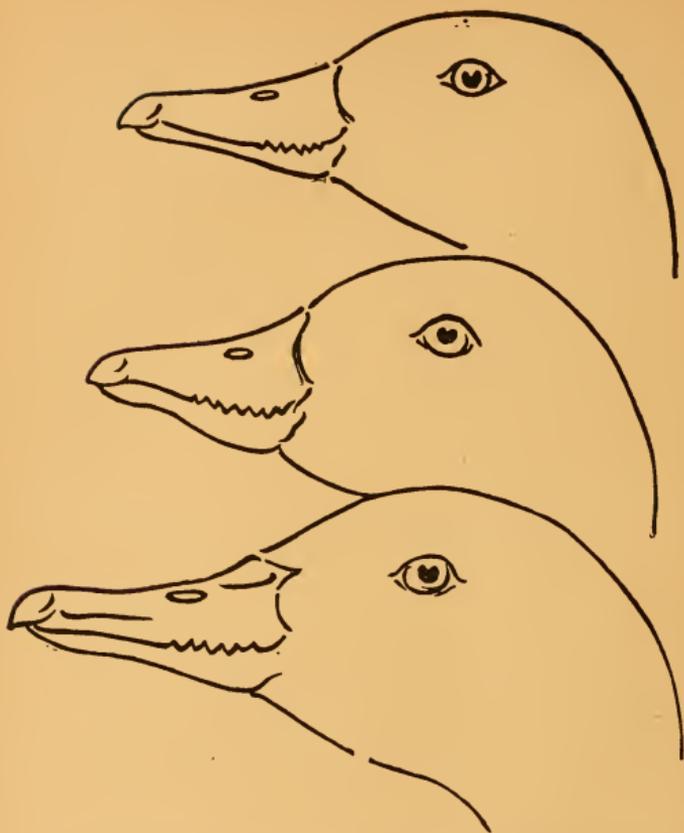
Length of head and body	3 ft. 3 in.
Spread of wings	5 ft. 6¼ in.
Length of bill	86 m.m.
Weight	10 lbs.
3. A thick-billed goose shot by Gibson.

Length of head and body	2 ft. 9 in.
Spread of wings	5 ft. 4½ in.
Length of bill	72 m.m.
Weight	9 lbs.
4. A bean goose shot by Sowerby.

Length of head and body	2 ft. 10 in.
Spread of wings	5 ft. 4½ in.
Length of bill	72 m.m.
Weight	7¼ lbs.

Besides having a thicker bill than the other species the thick-billed goose has a much rounder, deeper and heavier head; while that of the long-billed goose is comparatively long and compressed. The accompanying sketch, which has been drawn to scale from three of the specimens whose measurements are given above, will give some idea of the differences in the heads and beaks of the three species. They are half the natural size.

As regards the colours of these three species, I noticed that the long-billed geese were slightly paler, particularly about the head and neck, than the others, while the adult bean geese had a tendency to a rusty-red on the head and neck and sometimes even on the breast and belly. The thick-billed goose had, if anything, a darker head and neck than the others, the whole bird being readily distinguishable by its more heavy build.



Drawing showing the relative shapes and sizes of the heads and beaks of the bean goose (top figure), the thick-billed goose (middle figure) and the long-billed goose (bottom figure).

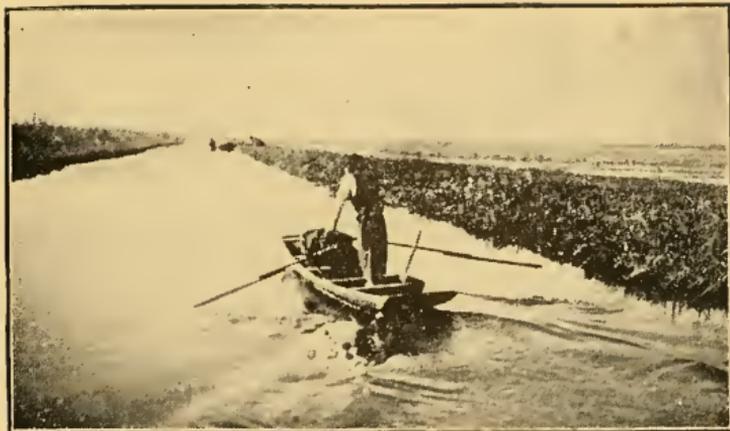
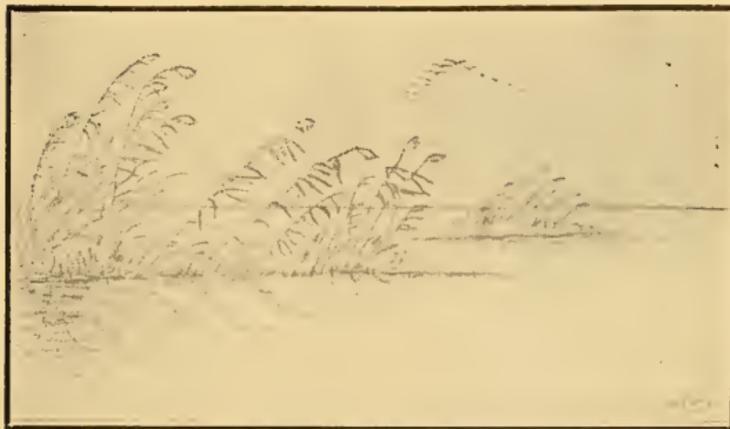
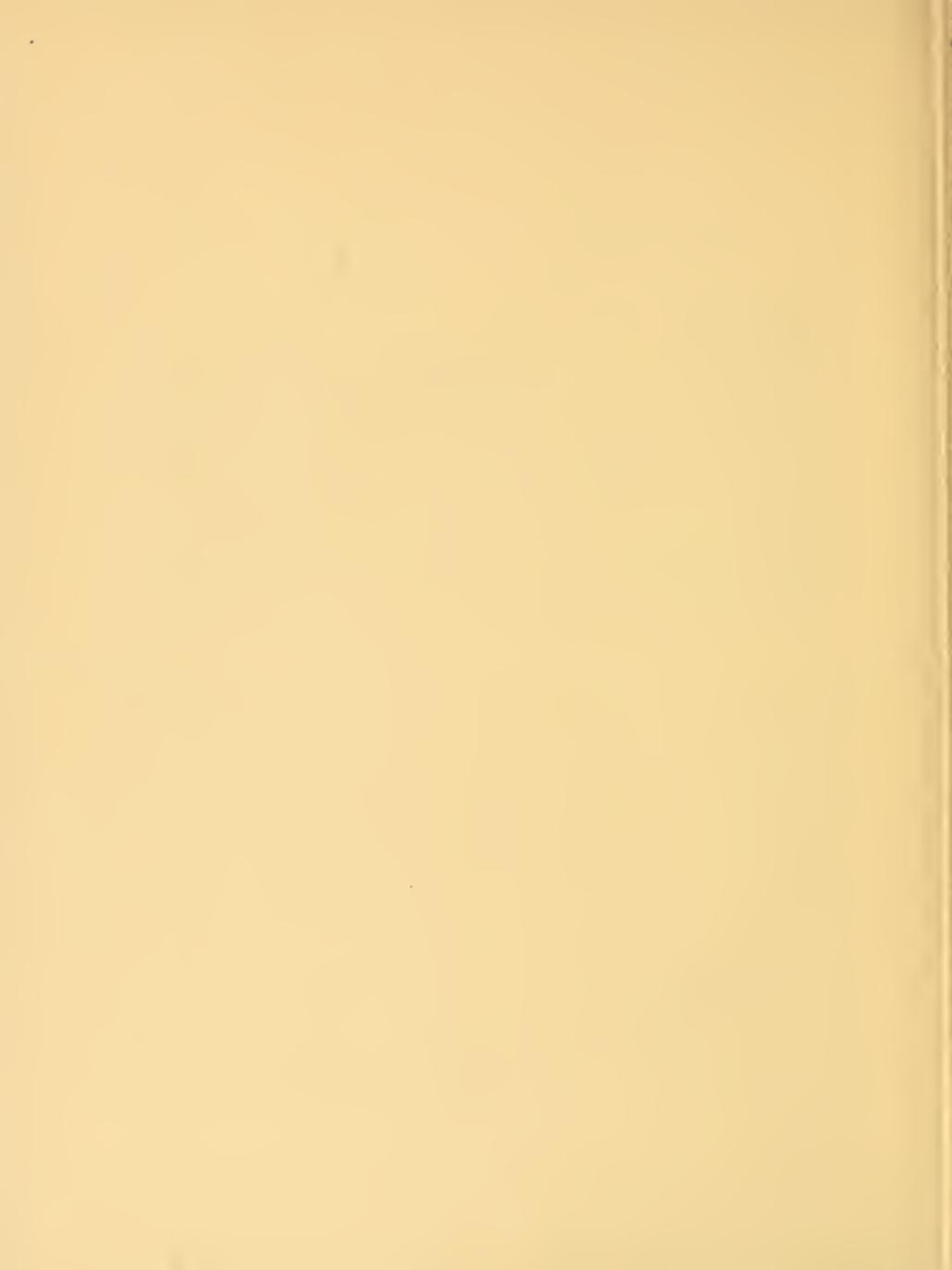


Photo by H. E. Gibson, Esq.

Small punt as used on the Tai-ping marsh.



Reeds in the marshes.



I thought at first that we had both the white-fronted goose (*Anser albifrons* Gm.) and the lesser white-fronted goose (*A. erythropus* L.) in our bag, but, after communicating with my friend Mr. La Touche on the subject, have come to the conclusion that only the former was represented.

This species is very much smaller than any of the foregoing, the heaviest specimens not exceeding four pounds in weight. It may be recognized by the white patch on the face at the base of the bill, and by the peculiar irregular black bands and patches on the lower breast and belly. The bill is pink and the legs yellow.

The Chinese grey-goose (*A. rubrirostris* Hodgs.) has a pink bill, but its legs are also pink, and it is a very large bird, rivalling the long-billed goose in size and weight.

The lesser white-fronted goose is smaller even than the white-fronted goose, from which it further differs in having orange or yellow eye-lids instead of brown.

One of the most interesting facts which we ascertained beyond a doubt was that different species of geese fly together in the same flock. Thus on one occasion I knocked a long-billed goose and a white-fronted goose out of the same flock. Another time I got a bean goose and a white-fronted goose out of a single skein, and I also got a long-billed goose and a bean goose out of the same flock. Gibson also noticed this mixing of species. It was noticeable that in every case the birds of the larger species were in the lead.

In this connection I might mention that I once saw what I took to be a smew, though it might have been a male golden-eye, taking its place in a skein of wild-geese.

One is often asked why geese and ducks and other aquatic birds take up the peculiar V shaped formation when flying. The explanation that I have always heard given by authorities on bird-life, is that the strongest bird leads at the apex of the V and cleaves the air for the others, each successive bird taking its place behind and to one side of the bird in front of it, so as to eliminate, as much possible, the resistance of the atmosphere, exactly as a cyclist loves to take up a position behind

a motor-car. If one watches a flock of geese carefully, it will be noticed that the apex of the V is taken, turn and turn about, by the largest birds, the smaller ones hanging on, as it were, at the extremities.

Other wild-fowl shot on the marsh or in the immediate vicinity were:—

Swinhoe's duck (*Anas zonorhyncha* Sw.). Very plentiful.

Mallard (*A. boscas* L.). A few.

Baikal or spectacled teal (*Querquedula formosa* Georgi). Very plentiful.

Common Teal (*Q. crecca* L.) Very plentiful.

Gargany or Summer teal. (*Q. circia* L.) A few.

Red-breasted Merganser (*Mergus serrator* L.). Common.

It is rather remarkable that we did not notice any of the other numerous species of wild-duck such as pintails, shovellers and gadwells, that are so plentiful round Tientsin in the spring and autumn, indeed Gibson told me that he had never shot or, as far as he knew, seen a pintail on the Lower Yang-tze; though shovellers and gadwells were to be had outside the marsh. Golden-eyes, sheld-ducks and falcated teal he had never seen either in this region, so it is to be presumed that these species go elsewhere to find suitable winter quarters.

Of other aquatic birds we saw coots, grebes, gulls, herons, cormorants and a few small waders or shore-birds.

There were large numbers of harriers, a few smaller hawks and several kinds of small perching birds.



CHAPTER XVII.

JIMMY.

Buy a pup and your money will buy
Love unflinching that can not lie--
Perfect passion and worship fed
By a kick in the ribs or a pat on the head.
*Nevertheless it is hardly fair
To risk your heart for a dog to tear.*

When the body that lived at your single will
When the whimper of welcome is stilled (how still!),
When the spirit that answered your every mood
Is gone—wherever it goes—for good,
*You will discover how much you care,
And will give your heart to a dog to tear.*

—Kipling.

JIMMY.



HOW often does it happen, during our brief journey through this sad vale of tears, that we make the acquaintance and friendship of some member of the lower creation of unusual and almost startling intelligence! and how often is that animal a dog; it may be just a nondescript mongrel, but nevertheless a creature in possession, it would almost seem, of a soul, or, at least, of something more in its doggy composition than the mere instincts of a brute beast.

Let preachers say what they like, I for one fail to see any reason why animals, such as these, should not continue to exist after death, every whit as much as many human beings, who do not seem to possess one half the sense or a quarter of the love and devotion of these canine friends of ours.

Who amongst us, who has had much to do with animals, can not remember some such creature, and does not entertain a sort of half belief half hope of meeting that creature again in the dim hereafter.

Horsfield has expressed it exactly, and at the risk of being suspected of plagiarizing I must quote his lines.

Is a man a hopeless heathen if he dreams of one fair day
When, with spirit free from shadows grey and cold,
He may wander through the heather in the unknown far away.
With his good old dogs before him as of old?

There it is; the dream, the hope of again meeting the old favourites; which only goes to show how completely a dog can wind itself into one's innermost being, so that the parting, when it comes, is as

the parting with a human friend, and the heart cries out for the only solace that is left—the hope, nay almost the demand, of a réunion in the future.

There was once a dog named Jimmy, who, at the time this story commenees, was little more than a pup. He was a thorough-bred English pointer, with long silky yellow ears, a broad muzzle, low hanging jaws, and a breadth between the eyes that was proof of unusual intelligence. He was high-sterned, bob-tailed, spotted like a Dalmatian, though with yellow instead of black, and he had a most engaging disposition.

He was bought in Shanghai with a companion named Keck for \$100, in the spring of 1909, and forthwith became a member of the Clark Expedition, to which I was attached as naturalist; and, since I did more hunting and shooting than any of the other members, he was handed over to my care.

During a long over-land journey into Kansu, Jimmy and Keck were allowed to run wild, which, I fear, was very bad for them from the point of view of their subsequent value as shooting dogs. However, the ranging at large gave to Jimmy a self-reliance and independence that stood him in good stead in his subsequent varied career, and made of him a sturdy and valuable companion.

Unfortunately for his early training as a sporting dog Keck, who was thoroughly trained and was rapidly teaching the younger dog all there was to know, was run over one day while trying to jump upon one of the carts, and thereafter the big bouncing good-natured puppy's education was left mainly to chance, for at the time I knew nothing of how a dog should be trained. Doubtless the very fact that he had to learn from experience by himself assisted in moulding his character and in bringing out his good points, marking him out for unusual things.

We reached Lan-chow Fu in due course, where the expedition stayed for a couple of months during which time Jimmy and I became fast friends, and it was then that he was presented to me by the leader of the expedition. I may say at once that though this was over eight years ago, and I have possessed at one time and another several dogs since

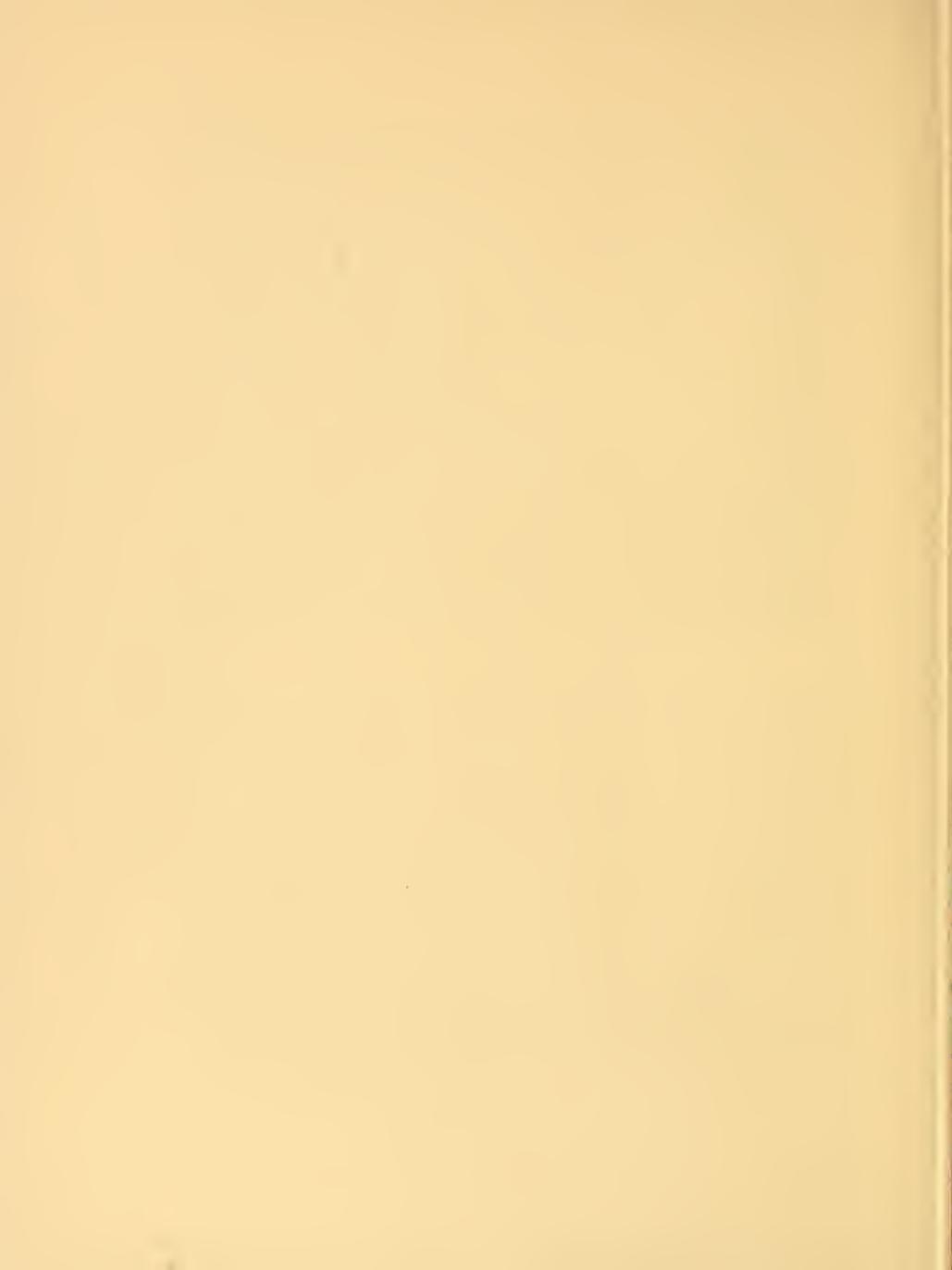


Jimmy.



Photo by Morgan Palmer, Esq.

Jimmy becomes a member of the Shensi Relief Expedition.



then, while Jimmy himself has passed to the Elysian Fields, I have never seen a dog like him for intelligence and sheer common sense, nor have I ever been able to fill his place in my affections. He was, as far as I am concerned, the only dog that ever existed.

I took Jimmy out with me into the country south of Lan-chou, where I did some hunting, and it was then that I really began to notice his remarkable intelligence.

One day, while I was sitting at lunch outside the flap of my tent in the shade of some tall poplars, the dog came begging for tit-bits. I gave him a piece of bread, which, however, he left lying on the ground. Apparently it was meat that he wanted, but, not believing in pandering to any fastidiousness like this, I pointed to the bread and scolded him. Still he left it there and would not eat it, so I refused to give him any thing else. Next day he was there again wagging his stumpy tail and slobbering with expectation, and as before I gave him a piece of bread. This he took, mouthed in a pretence of eating, and carried it away, wagging his tail and evincing every doggy sign of pleasure, as he disappeared behind the tent. He returned in a minute with his tail going harder than ever and a smile (he was the only dog I ever saw who really smiled) all over his face, at the same time licking his chops as though he had just had the most delicious morsel. He rather overdid his part for my suspicions were raised by his excessive signs of enjoyment, so I went behind the tent, and there sure enough was his piece of bread! Of course he got his meat.

As regards his smile it was one of the most extraordinary things about him. He had the power of wrinkling up his whole face at will, after the manner of a vaudeville comedian, and he would come up to a friend with his face literally wreathed in smiles, his whole body and stumpy tail wriggling and wagging at the same time. I only had to say "Smile Jimmy!" and he would curl his lips up and wrinkle his nose, while his eyes would disappear in two narrow slits in the most ludicrous manner. This he would do as often as I liked.

For some time after I had him he was inclined to disobey me when we were out travelling, and he learnt almost at once the exact length of

my whip, which I had purposely had made long, so as to reach the village curs and wonks that are ever ready to chivy a strange dog along the road.

As Jimmy could never be reached by the whip I had to resort to a small catapult, which had a certain amount of effect, till he learnt how to dodge the cash and small pebbles I used. Thereafter he had his own way for several months, and used to scour the country for a mile or so on either side of the road, as we travelled along. As we regularly made our twenty to thirty miles a day the distance the dog covered was enormous, and he developed muscles that stood out in lumps all over him.

But this was on our return journey from Lan-chou after the brutal murder by hostile natives of our Indian surveyor, Hazrat Ali, and the subsequent decision on the part of our leader to abandon the expedition.

Jimmy's treatment of the savage native dogs that always came out and threatened to mob him was as remarkable as the rest of his actions. After his first experience or two with them, when he lay down on his back, which as everybody know is a dog's way of crying for peace, and when he would have been torn to pieces but for our timely interference, he apparently decided to change his tactics and assume the offensive. One fine day he suddenly flew at a crowd of wonks that were dancing about us just out of the reach of our whips and yammering with fury. The effect was electrical. Not a single dog stayed to face the apparition of a short-haired white demon with hanging jaws and long ears flapping back in the wind. There was a general stampede for shelter, and from that time on Jimmy never paid any further attention to any Chinese dog, except when he felt in a playful mood and would chase them and bowl them over from behind, subsequently walking calmly away as if nothing had happened.

It must have been his manner that held them in check, for he bore himself just as a bullying prize fighter might, and not a wunk dared touch him.

Many a time have I seen him walk calmly into a native courtyard with five or six husky dogs as large or larger than himself, all barking



Jimmy takes the offensive.

and baring their cruel fangs, smell them one by one, show his contempt for them by scattering gravel in their faces and filth on their door-post and walk out again; and never once did I see one of the discomfitted pack so much as advance a step towards him during the whole performance.

An instance of his apparent reasoning powers occurred the day after we left Lan-chou. We were at a place called Chên-k'ou-yi, and, on leaving, found that heavy rains had rendered the usual road, which lay along a deep ravine, somewhat difficult for mule traffic.

This necessitated our mule train taking a side track into the hills and thus making a bit of a detour. After seeing the mules safely on their way I suddenly remembered Jimmy and looked about for him. He was nowhere to be seen, so I went back to the inn to enquire about him. They said he had been running about looking for us, but had started off after us about five minutes ago.

Out I went again, but could find no sign of him, till at last I picked up his trail in the ravine, which was the road he had travelled on his way to Lan-chow two months before. Some carts had evidently gone along that morning, so I decided to follow it as my pony could certainly go where carts could. Presently the dog's tracks ended, and I was completely at a loss what to do. I spent nearly an hour riding about looking for him and then gave it up and hurried along the ravine to overtake the mule-train, which, the natives told me, would finally join the main valley about three miles further on.

An hour later I overtook the carts that had passed along the ravine, and I asked the carter if he had seen a white dog. Had he seen a white dog indeed! Did not a devil of a white dog jump on to his cart, and, after growling at him, lie down comfortably in the bottom? Was he not frightened out of his wits, and was not that the dog hurrying away after those mules? Sure enough, it was Jimmy, who had decided in his own mind which road to take, at the same time taking a free ride along the stony ravine till he had spotted the mule train away in the distance, which he was now hurrying to overtake. Most dogs would either

have stayed at the inn or else started off on their way back to Lan-chou, but not Jimmy. His reason apparently told him that we were going on, and not back, and the fact that he took another road than the one I or the mules had taken proves that he was not following our scent.

Time went on and I came to have a home of my own in Tai-yuan Fu, and of course Jimmy was treated as one of the family. In the winter of 1909-10 I took my wife with me on a long journey into North-western Shansi, and it was on this expedition that the dog and I came to a thorough understanding as to which of us was master. He was a splendid pointer—had a nose that I have never seen equalled, and when he liked could work beautifully: but his early training—or lack of it—had not taught him obedience. Thus we came to have a series of disputes in the field; as a result of his refusing to listen to my commands. I tried whipping him, but he only grew angry or else ran away.

One evening he was lying at the foot of my bed in an inn. It was a bitterly cold night and I thought to make him comfortable by covering him up with a rug. He growled at me! so I spoke sharply and told him to get up. For answer he growled again and bared his teeth. Then I cuffed him, and he flew at me. He was a big dog and very powerful and we had a severe tussle in which I got the palm of my hand laid open to the bone. But my blood was up now and I laid into him with my fists till he howled for mercy. I gave him as severe a drubbing as I could and kicked him out into the servants quarters—but from that time on he was master. He never disobeyed me again. What all the beatings with whip or sticks had failed to do, had been accomplished when I took him on, man to dog, as it were, and showed him that for all his teeth and strength I could thrash him with my bare hands, and I veritably believe that the dog knew this and respected me accordingly.

If we were friends before we were doubly so now, and that dog wound his way into my affections as only one other animal, a pony, has ever done. We learned to work together in the field, and I could keep him ranging ahead of me a couple of yards or sixty, whichever suited me best, with only a steadying word now and then. My whistle, no matter where he was or what he was doing, would bring him to my

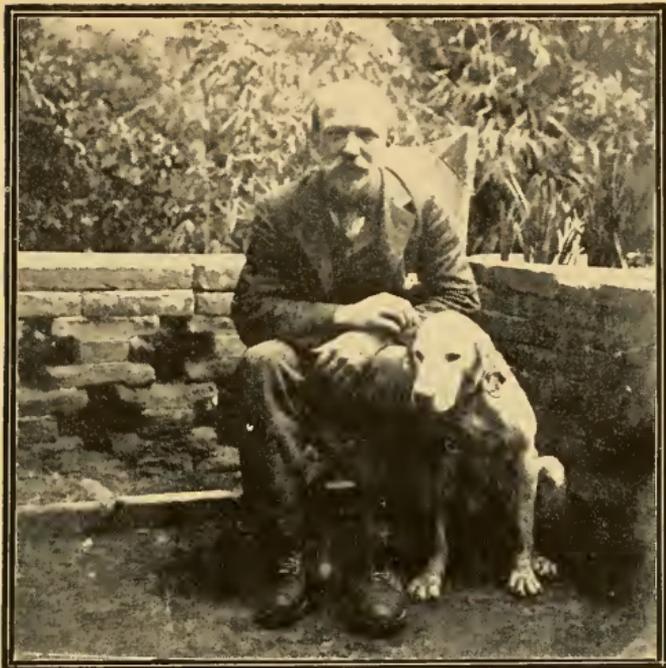
side or to heel; while my command 'sick him' would make him attack anything.

He was always giving us examples of his sagacity, but I have time only to recount one. It was while we were living in Tai-yuan Fu in a native house, which, as is usual in those parts, had a raised stone veranda. We kept a flock of tame ducks which used to annoy Jimmy by stealing his food. The cook was in the habit of pouring the dog's millet while still hot into an earthenware pan just outside the kitchen, and this meant that Jimmy had to lie beside it till it was cool enough to eat so as to keep the ducks from getting it. Besides the dog never finished his food right off, but liked to eat half and leave the rest till later. Of course, since the advent of the ducks, the second half of his meal was never there when he came back for it.

Some dogs would have bolted the whole pan-full at once, others would have gone for the ducks, but Jimmy hit on a better plan. He was seen one day to pick up the pan, full of hot millet, and carry it across the yard on to the stone veranda where the ducks could not get at it. It was an awkward job for a dog, but he managed it without spilling a bit of the food, and then went and flopped himself down on his favourite mat in the sun, yawned and calmly went to sleep.

This episode took place in the autumn of the fateful year of the Revolution, and within a week or so the disquieting rumours from Hankow began to come through. Then almost before we could realize it the cloud broke over us. The Manchu city was taken by the Shansi revolutionaries and looted, while the Manchus were driven out. The various *yamens* fell a prey to the rebels; the Governor and his family were killed; and that night the mob got out of control and looted and burned nearly the whole of the business portion of Tai-yuan Fu itself, while the Europeans took shelter in the two mission hospital compounds.

Later, when most of the Europeans had left for the coast, and in the midst of the turmoil and reign of terror and lawlessness which broke out all over Shansi and Shensi, the Shensi Relief Expedition was formed to go and rescue or take relief to the isolated missionaries in the latter province. Of course Jimmy had to go too, as I could not think of leaving him behind, and right glad was he to be on the road again.



Jimmy and the late Mr. G. A. Grant, who was murdered in Mongolia.



Photo by K. T. McCoy, Esq.

Mrs. Sowerby, Mrs. McCoy, Jimmy and the servants at the start of a three months trip in West Shansi.

It was a hard journey that he faced, for it was made in the dead of winter, while we were travelling light and as fast as was possible under the circumstances. But his magnificent strength and endurance, the fruits of his early journeys, stood him in good stead. He would run with our ponies all day, at the same time scouring the fields on either side of the road, scaring up game which we had no time to pursue or shoot. It was pathetic to see him point a covey of partridges or pheasants and then look round at us longingly, point again and finally run in and try to catch the birds himself.

How he ever stood that journey with his thin coat is a puzzle to me. One day he actually swam an open patch of water in the middle of a frozen river, the water dripping from him turning into icicles as he dragged himself out of the swift current. But he took no harm from it.

On arriving at an inn at the end of a day's march he used to hunt for the room where the chopped straw was kept, and promptly bury himself beneath it and go off to sleep, till his supper was ready; when his dear old head would emerge smiling and cheerful despite the zero weather.

At nights he used to come on to the *kangs* with us, and snuggle down between me and my next door neighbour. Mr. Keyte in his book "The Passing of the Dragon" records of him on these occasions that he was "a beast of a nuisance or a nuisance of a beast!" Probably he was. I can remember having many a quiet laugh to myself at the attempts of my companions to get rid of him, but he would not be denied; and it always ended in his getting well inside somebody's bed.

It was on this journey that Jimmy performed one of his best hunting feats. We were passing through some very nice country that was full of game and robbers, and had just left a town that had been occupied by a robber band the day before. It had been twelve anxious hours for us, as we had bearded the lion in his den, so to speak, by demanding from the chief a protection which he had seemed loath to give, and had spent the night in the midst of these bloodthirsty ruffians, who had been pillaging every town they could capture.

Naturally I felt considerable relief as we got out of that town in safety and well clear of the bandits, and so when I spied a roe-buck feeding in a little clearing down a valley I decided to celebrate the occasion after the manner of the young British subaltern who was wont to remark "It's a glorious day. Let's go and kill something." So with one of my companions and Jimmy I commenced a long stalk in the deep snow. To his credit, be it said, Jimmy spotted the deer at once, and was all eagerness to be after it, but at my whisper to 'heel' he kept obediently behind me throughout the whole stalk.

We succeeded in getting to within a few yards of where the deer had stood, and when we stood up the animal sprang up too and bounded away, only to fall dead as our rifles rang out. Next moment another deer broke cover and was bowled over, but recovered and was tearing off, when Jimmy sprang forward and with a desperate sprint overtook the animal, and, seizing it by the throat, brought it down. For a pointer the whole performance from the commencement of the stalk and the final rush in was a most unusual piece of work, and I have yet to see another dog of Jimmy's undoubted quality and breeding, that would have the common sense to carry out a similar feat.

After our return to Tientsin Jimmy had a poor time of it till the spring duck and snipe shooting came on, when I discovered that not only was he a good land dog, but he was equally good in water. The plain, especially beyond Hai-kuang-sau, was more or less flooded, and I used to row out for miles in my little canvas boat. Jimmy always came, but not in the boat. He would wade where possible and swim where it was too deep to wade, and the amount of hard work he would put in was extraordinary. And funnily enough, it was only birds that fell into the water that he would retrieve. On land he would track down and kill a wounded bird, or find a dead one, but never once did he retrieve one all the years I had him. If, however, I dropped a snipe or duck into water he would retrieve it at once, just as if he had worked it all out in his own mind that I could secure my own birds on land so long as he showed one where they were, but that it was his business to get them from the water. I do not doubt that I could have taught the dog to

retrieve, but as long as I had him there was no need, for I never lost a bird, except slightly wounded ones, that flew a long way before alighting. Jimmy always found killed or wounded birds that fell anywhere within a reasonable distance, and showed me where they were. Once, indeed, when I hit an eared-pheasant (*Crossoptilon*) which flew clear across a wide valley before it settled, Jimmy followed it up and caught it in the thick brush, where I found him hanging on to the precious bird for dear life. That was his way: he would always stay by the kill until I came up and bagged it.

His attitude towards children was wonderful. When in Taiyuan Fu he used to go to the different houses, and romp with the young hopefuls of the European community. They would harness him to their mail-carts and pull him about, but never once did he even growl at them, though he used sometimes to frighten the servants of the various compounds out of their lives by bareing his teeth and rushing at them barking,—but that was only play, and was done apparently to amuse the children.

In 1912 I took him with me up into North Shansi where he used to accompany me on sheep and wapiti hunting expeditions, and later we spent a summer in Mongolia, so that one way and another he covered a good deal of North China in his travels. He was a splendid watch dog, and during the day was most useful in keeping the mobs of curious natives at a respectful distance. When these got too pressing I used to say "Sick him Jimmy," and the dog, raising every hair on his back like a stiff brush, and with bared gums, would spring at the mob, barking furiously. There was never a native who could stand his onslaught, though he never so much as touched the hem of one of their flying blue gowns. His power to frighten them lay in his wonderful gifts of facial contortion, his deep voice and the way he used to bounce up and down in his charge.

His end was a sad one. It was after my return from Mongolia, when I took a house in Tientsin, and poor Jimmy found the police regulations very irksome indeed. He simply could not get used to a muzzle, so I had to keep him in my compound with only his collar on.

Even that amount of confinement and restraint was too much for him, and whenever the opportunity offered he would slip out of the gate and pay a round of calls.

One day he did not return and I went round the municipal kennels in search of him without success. Next day he turned up late in the evening, with his collar gone, looking very bedraggled and desperately hungry. I shut him up inside the house that night, but the coolie let him out early next morning, and that was the last I ever saw of him. Doubtless there was some Delilah who lured him to his doom, whatever it was, for Jimmy's great weakness was his foolishness where the fair sex of his kind were concerned. Search as I would I could find no trace of him.

He has probably gone to some canine paradise or happy hunting ground, but I have never ceased missing him or mourning his loss, nor, as I have already said, has any other dog ever been able to take his place. The best of them seems so far short of all that he was, that to me they can never become the friend that he was. Sometimes when I see others petting and fondling their favourites I think of my Jimmy, and I vow that never, no, never will I ever again "*give my heart for a dog to tear.*"



CHAPTER XVIII.

HUNTING THE TAKIN.

“ Our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.”

—*Shakespeare.*

HUNTING THE TAKIN.



WHEN in the early part of 1914 I announced my intention of making a trip into South-west Shensi in search of takin, my friends one and all asked what in the world might that animal be, and what was it like. I wonder how many sportsmen in China could answer that question. I must confess that I found it somewhat difficult, for of all strange animals the takin or *Budorcas*, as it is scientifically called, is one of the strangest. Imagine, if you can, a goat-like animal, the size of an ox, with a thick cream-white coat tinged with gold, a heavy Roman nose and ungainly head, thick legs, large splayed hoofs with enormous dew-claws, a mere stub of a tail and a fine pair of horns that rise from the top of the head, bend outwards and then backwards over the thick neck, finally ending in graceful points, and you have a takin.

That is how I would describe a takin of the Tai-pei-shan region and that was the animal I was after.

As, however, I was to pass through some of the finest wild-fowl and pheasant country that China has to offer, I took pains to raise the envy of all my dear sporting friends by telling them just what sort of sport I anticipated. The realization was far beyond even my expectations, and as I have always tried to share the pleasures of the field with men of kindred temperament, but without the opportunities that I have of getting away up country, I am writing this account of my experiences, as I sit in a "little border station, tucked away beneath the foothills, where the trails run out and stop."

My brother, Dr. E. S. Sowerby, whom I shall hereafter speak of as Ted, and who was due to take up missionary work in Si-an Fu, was my travelling companion from Peking as far as his station, and as he was a novice at shooting, at least with the fowling piece, I had the double pleasure of teaching him, and at the same time displaying my own prowess as a bird shot.

After we had done with the Railways, the Government Railways of North China to be explicit, of which I should like to write much of a most uncomplimentary nature, we set out by cart from Mien-chih Hsien, the then constructional terminus, along the main road that runs through Si-an right out to Lan-chou Fu in Kansu and on into Chinese Turkestan.

I am merely stating the sober truth, when I say that never once did we go more than half a mile from this much used highway, yet after we had passed the first few ridges of hills, we got all the shooting we wanted. I will admit that I am easily satisfied in the matter of bird shooting, which perhaps accounts for our bag for four days totalling not more than sixty-one head, but what is the use of killing birds for the mere sake of killing.

At first we came across teal and duck in the streams that cut through the deep loess deposits, and form grateful relief every five or six miles from the deep dust-filled roads, typical of that tedious country. Here Ted broke his duck, by bagging three teal out of a flock of a dozen. They were the first edible birds he had ever shot, and the day, thenceforth was voted a decided success by us both, for to know that one's friend has attained happiness is as good, if not better, than to attain it oneself.

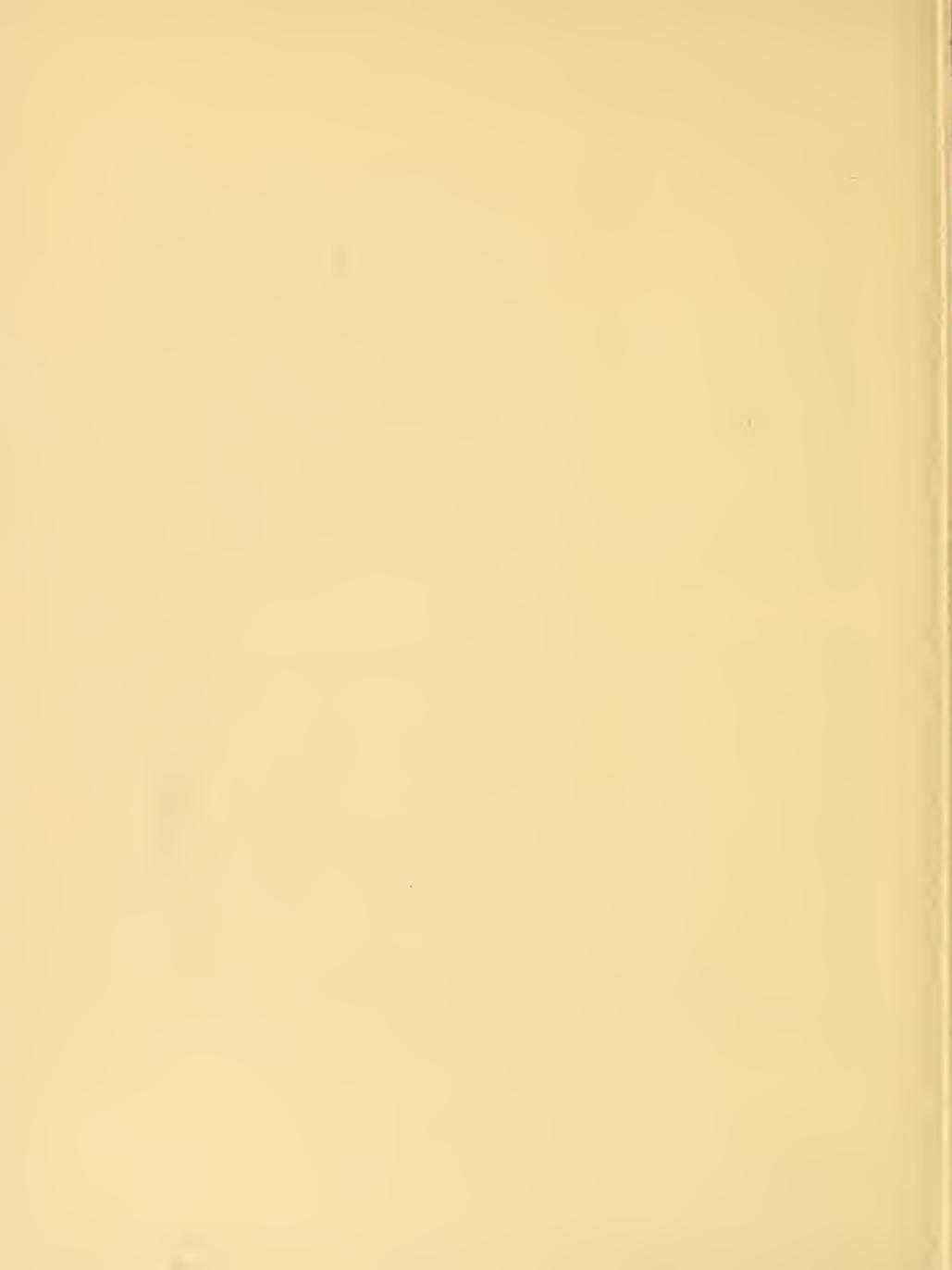
Next day, we got fairly into goose country, travelling, as we were, along the southern bank of the Yellow River. But flying inland from the muddy flats the wily birds kept too high for us. However, towards evening, we found them feeding in the fields, and were able to get near enough to get in an effective shot or two as they rose. It was not till we passed Tung Kuan and emerged on to the wide flat basin of the Wei Ho that we began to get the best shooting. The first morning after



View from the top of the Tai-peí-shan range.



Cliff under which the author camped.



leaving that historic pass, we found mallards feeding upon the paddy fields along the roadside in sufficient numbers to enable us to make a pretty bag before the noontide halt at Fu-shui. Ideal duck country it was. An abundance of cover in the way of mud ridges enabled us to get near enough to the birds, so that as they rose a right and left was a matter of comparative ease. Unfortunately—or perhaps fortunately, for a beginner is liable to burn a lot of ammunition—Ted had only a single barrel gun, but after a few misses, due chiefly to excitement, he got the hang of the thing, and thereafter kept pace with me getting his one bird for my two right along, which for a beginner was very creditable. Without meaning to boast, I may say that I was in exceptional form, and was averaging four birds to five shots. This I think was largely due to the fact that there was such an abundance of game, that one was not at all put out by the fear of a bird getting away, and also that the country was so easy, that one did not get tired. We trudged along all that day, taking the birds that were near the road and enjoying ourselves thoroughly.

One spot particularly gave us a splendid half hour. It was a belt of rice fields, just before reaching Fu-shui. Here we put up teal and mallard and snipe in such profusion that it was difficult to decide which to go for. Suffice it to say that we came out of the patch with sixteen birds between us. It was only the fact that lunch awaited us at Fu-shui, whither the carts had gone to make the noon halt, and that we were getting hot and thirsty, that drew us from that seductive spot. But better was to come.

After lunch we set out with the carts, well satisfied with the day's sport, but soon a flock of mallard feeding on the fields within a hundred yards of the road proved an irresistible temptation, and off we went after them. They got up, however, without giving us a fair shot, and settled a little further along. Then up jumped a hare, and immediately was added to the bag. After this I returned to the road, but Ted walked on a bit putting up ducks and teal, which were mostly out of range. There was no cover and the birds could see him too easily so he too gave it up.

Scarcely had he returned to the road, however, than we came to a stretch of low lying swamp, where last year's stubble and rushes still stood. As we passed along we could see birds getting up and settling again, so we decided on one more try for them. As we entered flock after flock of mallard and teal rose. I dropped a couple of the former but could not find them in the dense growth of sedge and rush. Ted, who had taken a different direction, put up an enormous flock of geese, and, to my surprise, several pheasants. Naturally I left the duck alone and went after the pheasants, bagging three handsome cocks. I had already bagged a couple of hens that morning on the south side of the road, while going after a flock of teal. In order to make sure of the pheasants in the spot where we now were I had to let any number of mallard go. They were getting up exactly like snipe on a good day, here, there and everywhere, within easy range. We returned to the carts with our bag increased by several birds. Less than a mile further along the road we came upon the geese again in less dense cover, and without the least trouble got within range. I made a right and left and Ted brought down his bird. Then some more pheasants got up and the doctor grassed one, which being his first brought the day's shooting to a most satisfactory close. The shooting had to cease, for I had not kept out enough cartridges. My bag that day was twenty head, comprising two geese, five pheasants, five mallard, four teal, three snipe, and a hare. Ted's bag was half that, and lacked hare or snipe.

Next day, I took care to leave out plenty of cartridges, and we were well rewarded. We began as before on mallard, getting four between us, then bagged a goose each. Just before noon we reached a small pond, a favourite resort of all kinds of duck, lying right beside the road. Here we shot twelve birds, including mallard, pintails, shovellers and teal. As most of these dropped into the water, I had to strip and swim for them. It was a cold but enjoyable experience. This satisfied us for the day, our bag being fourteen duck, two teal, and two geese. The day following was almost a blank, as we left the river and made a detour to the south reaching Lin-tung, famous for its hot springs, by noon.

We luxuriated the rest of the day in that delightful spot, cleaning off the dust and dirt of a week's travel and lounging about the beautiful grounds of the garden laid out by the famous Emperor Kang Hsi.

From Lin-tung to Si-an Fu is but a short half day's march, but it is a paradise of wild fowl. We bagged seven geese, three hares and one mallard, ere we were met by our little sister Ada and Mr. Shorrocks, resident missionaries both, who had come out to welcome us. Thence into the city, though geese were temptingly plentiful on either side of the road, shooting was abandoned, for we had much to talk about.

Thus ended the most glorious four days' shooting it has ever been my luck to enjoy. True many a local sportsman of Tientsin has made a bigger bag during week ends at Ti-li-fu or Chou-chuang-tze, and elsewhere; but think of the variety we enjoyed, and remember that we were keeping pace with our carts the whole time, and they were doing from 25 to 30 miles a day.

Our bag by the end of the journey was:—

15	geese
21	duck
12	teal
6	pheasants
4	hares
3	snipe
—	
61	head.

By stopping off a day or two and going seriously to work, there would have been no difficulty in multiplying it by ten.

In some places, especially in the marshes just after leaving Fu-shui, there must have been hundreds of thousands of geese and duck. At each shot we fired they rose ahead of us in clouds, and even then many stayed behind to rise as we came upon them.

The sight of them reminded me of a yarn, which a well known Tientsin resident tells, and which I hope he will forgive me for repeating.

He was travelling with an American of sporting proclivities, and they saw an enormous flock of duck out on the mud flats of a river, when

his friend remarked: "Say if I had my scatter-gun and my spike-tailed smell-hound here, I could make some impression on those ducks." We made "some impression" on those we saw, the proceeds of our shooting supplying the Si-an Fu European community with meat for a week.

I stopped off a week in that town renewing old acquaintance and preparing for the trip into the Tai-pei-shan region, which lies about 90 miles to the south-west.

As mules would be necessary, the latter part of the journey being up rough mountain valleys, I hired four good animals, and for a guide engaged a servant, who had previously visited the district I was to hunt in.

Of the journey to the foot of the mountains, I need say little. We did long stages, passing for the first three days through fine wheat country. Daily large flocks of geese were encountered, and once or twice bustards were seen. As I had no use for their meat, there being no Europeans the other end of my journey this time who could use it, I left the birds severely alone. It was no uncommon thing as I walked along the road to have flock after flock of geese pass over my head within easy range.

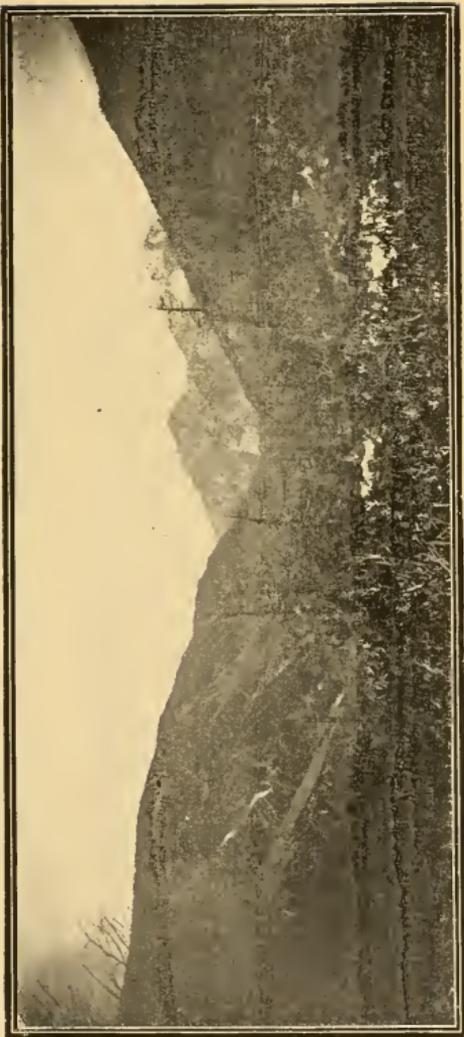
Hares were also plentiful and occasionally I put up pheasants by the road side.

On the fourth day, we commenced the ascent of a deep mountain gorge, picturesque but rocky. By mid-afternoon we reached the furthest point possible for mule traffic, and here we put up with a friendly native, who had harboured several other parties hunting in the neighbourhood.

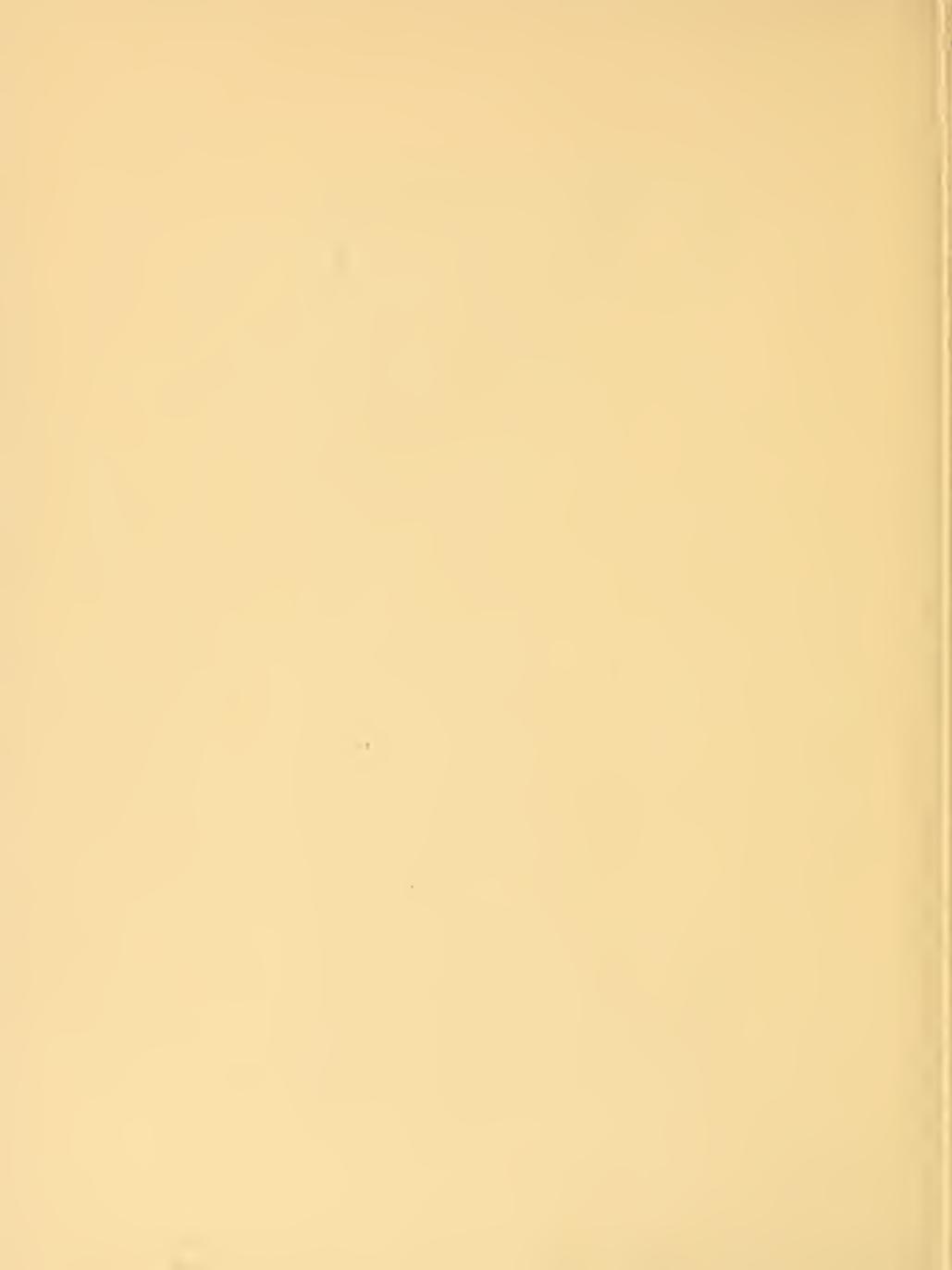
Then followed five tiresome days of delay, while we waited for the weather to clear up and give us a chance of ascending into the great Tai-pei-shan mountain system.

During those five days my taxidermist and I hunted and collected in the foothills. These and the valley itself were simply alive with pheasants, and I was able to make a collection of these handsome birds. I found two varieties, one with a white collar and one without any collar at all. The latter belongs to the species inhabiting the Upper Yangtze the former conforming more to the type found throughout Central and

Plate 34.



View from 11,000 feet altitude in the Tai-pei-shan region.



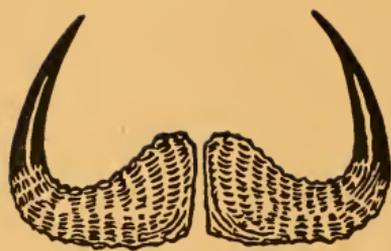
North Shensi and Shansi. In these the collar is not complete, a gap occurring in the front. In the Chihli species the collar is very broad and complete right round the neck.

Evidently the mountains that fringe the southern portion of the Wei Valley in South Shensi, form the boundary line between the Yangtze and the more northerly varieties of the common pheasant, and in the district of which I write they were over-lapping. Indeed I found birds with the white collar in all stages of development, but forming bulky specimens as they do, I was obliged to be content with just taking one or two of the pronounced types.

Besides pheasants roe deer were abundant. A well known European, who had just visited the spot had shot nine, getting five in one day. He also, so the natives told me, made a bag of over 200 pheasants, killing only cocks, which he distributed amongst his numerous Chinese friends in the district. I was told that boar, goral and serow might also be had in these foothills, so that the spot might well be marked on the map as a sportsman's paradise. For my part I wanted only takin, and if the chance offered a serow or two. The other things I had shot in plenty in other places.

Yang San, the local takin hunter had been engaged, also four porters, to carry only bare necessities up to our prospective camp in the mountains. It must be understood that we had an eight thousand foot ascent before us ere we could hope to see takin, and at this time of year the slopes above six thousand feet were a mass of ice and snow. The devious paths by which we were to travel were exceedingly steep, five or six miles a day being the utmost limit that could be managed by the porters. Of course, we, travelling light, could do twice or three times that distance.

At last on the sixth day after our arrival in the vicinity, the clouds cleared away, and we were able to commence the ascent.



CHAPTER XIX.

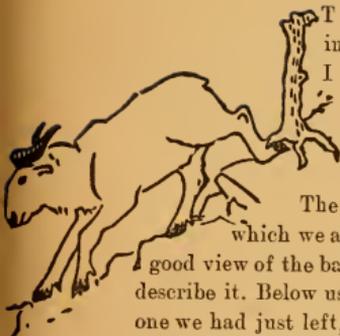
—
HUNTING THE TAKIN.

The pendent forests, and the mountain greens,
Strike with delight; there spreads the distant view,
That gradual fades till sunk in misty blue:
Here Nature hangs her slopy woods to sight,
Rills purl between and dart a quivering light.

—Selborne.

HUNTING THE TAKIN.

(Continued.)



It is not easy to convey to those unused to mountaineering any idea of the difficulties of that ascent. As far as I can gather all previous parties visiting the district had done so in the summer months. I had unfortunately chosen the early spring, and so came in for an unpleasant amount of difficult snow work.

The first climb was over the ridge of the foothills, doing which we ascended fifteen hundred feet. At the top I got my first good view of the back range, and a wonderful sight it was. I must stop to describe it. Below us lay a deep rocky valley, not boulder strewn like the one we had just left, but well filled with brush and trees, and with a crystal-clear brook chattering and bubbling between overhanging banks. Beyond on rapidly ascending slopes were a few scattered farmsteads, tilled fields occurring between patches of dense scrub. Higher up, great defiles and chasms cut deeply into the massive sides of the high mountain. Here on the outstanding ribs of jagged rock, and even up the sides of the chasms themselves spruce or hemlock clung, their twisted roots writhing in and out amongst the cracks and crannies like monster serpents. Birch also, with hazel, poplar and rowan formed dense cover where the soil was more favourable. Then came bamboo thickets, and above these forests of giant rhododendron. Here also the snow line commenced; and the chasms, widening into amphitheatres, were filled with ice. Above all were the last grand sweeps to the mountain tops, where the snow lay, in places, ten or more feet deep, and where nought but larch, and a stunted hardy rhododendron could grow. To the right as I faced south I could see that the mountains dwindled, ridge after ridge of blue and purple fading away into the distance. To the left they rose ever higher, culminating at last in the stupendous mass of Tai-pei-shan itself, where

a dreary waste of snow covered all, and neither tree nor protruding rock could be seen. Our road lay down through the valley, up the opposing slopes, through the bamboo jungle and rhododendrons, the hemlock and the larch, up and over, the highest ridge and so into the valleys beyond, where only could I hope to see takin at this time of the year.

After a rest, for the first ridge had proved very steep, we descended the valley, and stopped for lunch half way up the opposite slope. Then we commenced to climb again finally camping, just before night came on in a cave at an altitude of eight thousand feet.

Next day we continued climbing. We saw some blood-pheasants amongst the rocks and snow, and I managed to shoot one with my rifle. It was a beautiful bird, of a greyish colour streaked with black and white, with a conspicuous chestnut patch on the wings, pale green lower breast and rose-scarlet under tail-covert, the tail feathers being edged with the same conspicuous colour, from which the bird derives its name. Brilliant red legs, and peculiar black, ear-like tufts of feathers on the head, complete its almost artificial appearance. I saw many more on my subsequent wanderings, but as the flesh was decidedly poor in flavour, not to say positively distasteful, I left them alone.

When we had reached an altitude of between 9,000 and 10,000 feet, as if I had not done enough climbing, Yang San suggested that we should break off to the west, and search along the side of a long spur for a lone bull takin that was wont to frequent the spot. I agreed and we set off, leaving the porters to continue up the slope towards the top of the mountain. After crossing a pass wondrously beautiful with its low squat spruce and larch, its thickets of dwarf juniper, deep crimson rhododendrons, and masses of lichen, we commenced to descend by means of a rocky scree, into the head of a wide deep valley. How I hated having to do this, for it all had to be climbed again, but needs must when the devil drives. I know not whether it was Yang San that was the devil, or whether I had one inside egging me on to risk life and limb in the vain hope of bagging the largest takin bull ever seen. All I do know is that after descending a thousand feet or so, we commenced to work along the ridge—itsself a miniature mountain range—skirting frightful chasms, and running out upon giddy spurs, as we searched in



A waterfall in the Tai-pei-shan.



vain every ravine, draw and grassy or bamboo covered slope for our quarry Yang San pointed out spots where others had shot—or missed takins, but never a one did we see, nor living animal of any description, save a few small birds. Finally we stopped and had lunch, and then commenced the climb back. By three o'clock we overtook the struggling porters, and by six had reached a half built temple right at the top of the mountain, where we stopped for the night. It was bitterly cold, and freezing hard. The altitude I estimated, by means of an aneroid barometer, at between 11,000 and 12,000 feet.

The only available shelter could just hold the natives, and as I had more and better bedding than they I gave it up to them. In spite of the bitter cold—I could feel it through my bed clothes—I slept soundly through sheer exhaustion. We had come up 8,000 ft. in two days, Yang San and I having added another 1,000 or so to that by our fruitless hunt for the lone bull. The last four thousand had been through deep snow, so I feel that we had earned our rest.

The day following we were up with the dawn, and a glorious dawn it was. I remember how wonderful the air felt as I stood outside the hut, and surveyed the scene. As the sun peeped over the distant ridges it sent slanting beams of rosy light scintillating across the snow, the larches casting shadows of the purest blue by contrast, while the valleys beyond were filled with a sea of heavy banking clouds.

I was more than thankful, when I found that the day's march would be down hill practically all the way. What a blessed relief it was to use other than the climbing muscles, yet before the day was done, I would have given anything to climb again—or, best of all, to walk a mile or so on the flat. Still there was so much of natural interest on all sides, that one did not notice the strain as much as might have been expected.

Perhaps the hardest bit of that day's journey was across a sharply sloping snow-field, which occupied an immense amphitheatre-like valley-head. How the porters managed to cross it I do not know, but cross it they did, and by three in the afternoon deposited their loads at the base of an overhanging cliff called Pei-guai-tze, where a rough

lean-to shelter had been erected, which was to be our headquarters while hunting the neighbouring valleys and mountain sides for takin. As I could not stand the acrid smoke which at all times filled the shelter, I built myself a separate one, spread my bed upon some coffin boards (there were plenty about, woodcutters having been busy for weeks past in the neighbourhood), and erected my little collapsible stove, a luxury which I blessed at the time, and for which I blush now! A square meal washed down with copious draughts of tea, and a good night's rest put me to rights for the following day's hunt.

It would be difficult to describe my feelings as I set out that morning with Yang San and two of the bearers in search of what is, perhaps, the rarest of big game animals. I had held myself severely in hand during dreary days of travel and weary days of waiting. It was just six years since I had first heard of the takin in this district and had made up my mind to get after them. I came near to attaining my ambition then, but circumstances prevented my getting to the spot. A year and a half later my old friend and erstwhile fellow collector, Mr. Malcolm P. Anderson, reached the place and secured the first adult specimens of what turned out to be an entirely new species of takin, an honour such as falls to the lot of few collectors in these days. He wrote me from the spot telling me of his discovery, and again I vowed to visit it myself some day. Thereafter year by year various wealthy European sportsmen came and secured trophies of this most coveted of animals.

Now I too was about to realize one of my keenest ambitions, and, though I strove to hide it, was filled with the excitement of the man who sees his first deer. Soon, however, I had sufficient to do to follow my guide, and all was forgotten in the intolerably hard work of crossing bamboo thickets and climbing the most abominable side ridges, where the undergrowth might well have prevented the passage of a cat, let alone a man. Yet everywhere were signs that takins, with their great ox-like bodies, had passed freely. The heads of the bamboo sprays were all closely cropped, showing where the great animals had fed. On the rocky ridges, sheltered 'neath the hemlock, bare patches of earth, well beaten down and smooth, showed where they had lain.

Ever the spoor grew fresher. We crossed the stony valley-bottom, and commenced a fatiguing climb up the other side, then turned to the left and skirted the mountain again. We had gone about a mile, when, emerging from a rhododendron thicket, I was suddenly aware of some yellow-white objects lying upon the rocks of a great scree between three and four hundred yards away. One glimpse through my pocket telescope assured me that they were takins. I could make out three, of which one was plainly visible, lying well exposed upon a rock. The other two were partially hidden by trees, but one was not more than 300 yards away and was a very big fellow. Between us and the quarry lay a wide expanse of bamboo, matted and thick. Above this a heavy rhododendron covert stretched right up to the crest of the ridge: below was an exposed jumble of great rocks, bare of any cover save a few low bushes and moss. Vainly I searched for a way of approaching the unsuspecting animals without the risk of being heard or seen. To cross the bamboo without making a noise was an impossibility, for there was no path and the dried leaves and dead stems underfoot would betray us. To try and get at the animals from above did not recommend itself, as there seemed no likelihood of attaining a position whence they could be seen through the dense growth. A long shot seemed the only thing.

We sat down and had a smoke while we considered the situation. Strange though it may seem all the excitement of the morning had gone. There were several trees and a couple of dried stumps close at hand, and I tried each of these in turn to see if I could get a good rest for a long shot. Always some small twigs came between the sights and the big bull that I had marked down, and I dared not risk the shot. Yang San suggested waiting till the takin got up, and so exposed a bigger mark, but I did not care to risk that either, for, once the animal moved, I knew my aim would be unsteady. At last I found a stump from which I had a clear vision of my quarry. Slowly I brought the sights up till the bull rested at the mouth of the V on the apex of the foresight. I knew I was doing wrong to hazard such a shot. I felt certain of hitting my mark, but what would follow. A stomach wound would mean hours of remorseless tracking, the same with a broken limb.

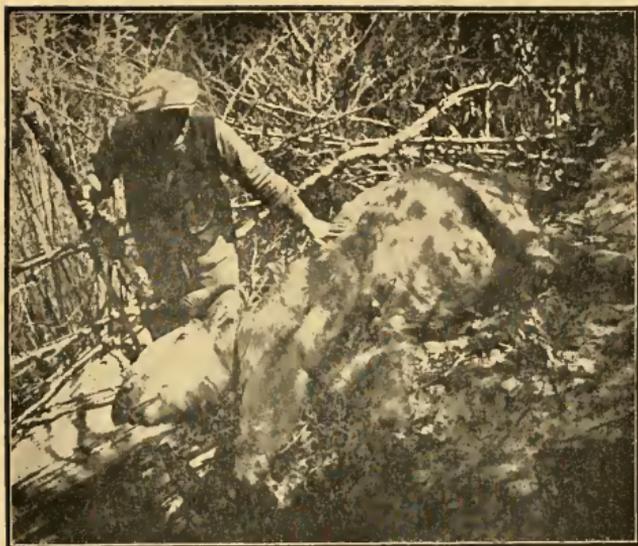
I was just about to take the sights off and get up, pending some more favourable chance, when that little voice, which has so much to do with our lives prompted, "Why not now?" That was all. My hand squeezed, there was a report and the bull jumped up as though stung, and shot out of sight behind some dense undergrowth. He was hit for a certainty. The other two takins vanished like smoke. Breathlessly we waited for the bull to reappear over the next shoulder. I gave him ten minutes, but he never showed. Then, leaving the two porters to mark the line of his flight if he should break cover before we could reach him, Yang San and I dived into the bamboo. After a deal of hot work we reached the spot where the bull had lain. Scarcely had we done so when there was a terrific rush from above, accompanied by a series of coughing snorts and a huge white body tore past us, missing Yang San by a foot or two in its headlong rush down hill. Twice I fired. The bull dashed out of sight: there was only the sound of rending bushes and then silence. We followed in hot pursuit, but we might have taken our time, for within thirty yards we came upon our quarry, hanging at an impossible angle between two trees, stone dead.

He was a monster, with a fine pair of horns. My first bullet had entered his left side and travelled through the stomach and lungs, passing close to the heart, and lodged in the right shoulders. The other two bullets both found their billets, one in the abdomen and the other in the flank after breaking the left hind leg. It was one o'clock then, and it took till four to photograph, measure, skin and quarter the great animal.

Six o'clock saw us back in camp, well contented with the day's work. Yang San said we had had exceptional luck, for to kill our quarry and get its head and hide, with some of the meat back to camp within twelve hours was unusual in that country of great distances and difficult going.

And so I attained my ambition.

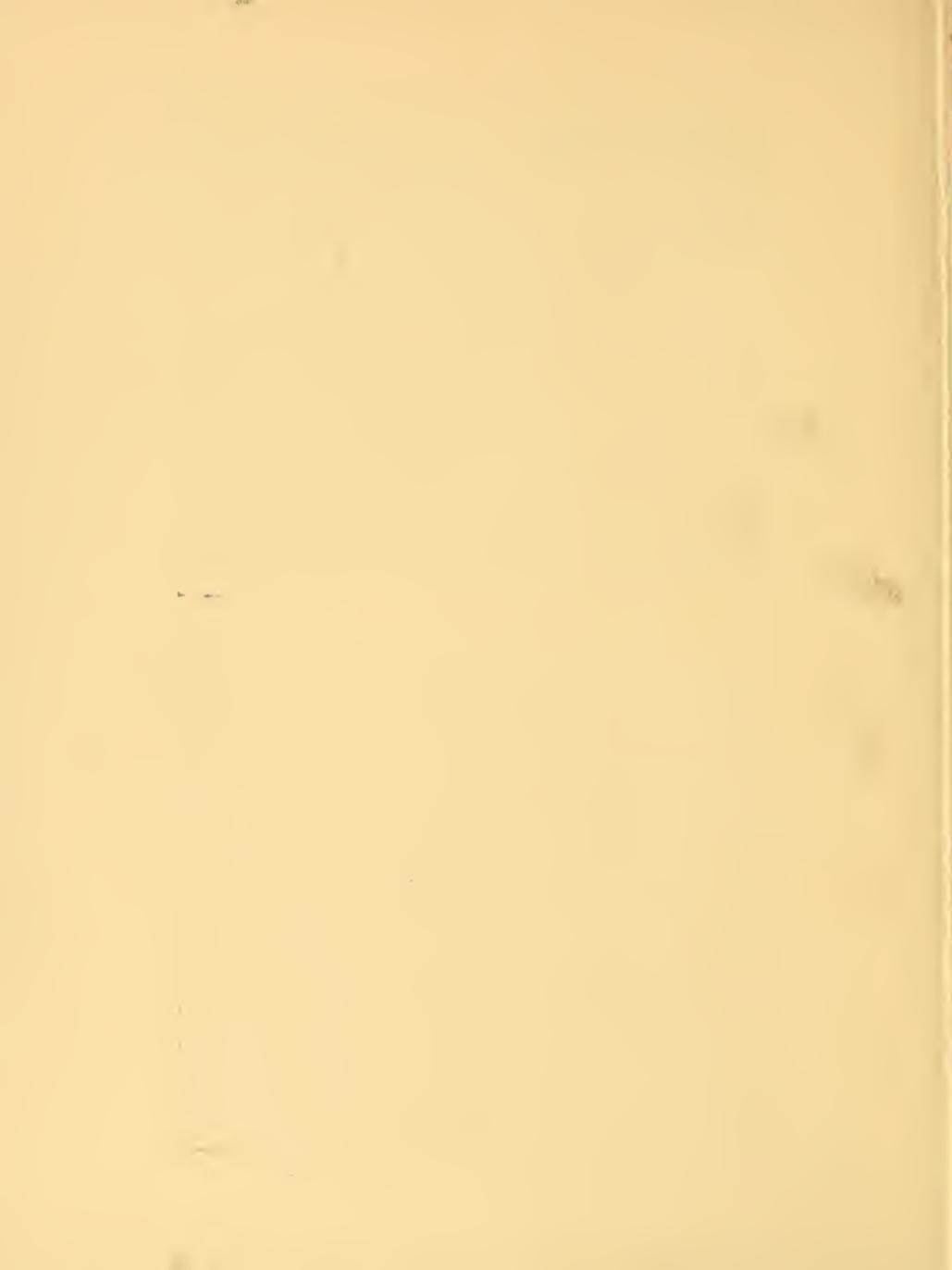
Next day, we went back to the carcase, with some wood cutters, and sent them back to camp with what was left of the meat. Then we



The author and his first Takin.



A 600 lbs. Takin, photographed where it fell.



continued the hunt. We had an arduous day, scouring all the side valleys and spurs of the main ridge. At two o'clock Yang San wished to turn back, but there remained one more tempting ridge ahead of us and I insisted on going on. It was well that I did so, for on reaching its crest an hour later, it was to look straight down upon a couple of takins feeding. There they were, utterly unconscious of our presence, pulling down the feathery bamboo tops and biting off the green leaves. It was possible to get nearer, and Yang San wanted me to do so, but what need. Barely 150 yards away, and below us in plain view, they presented an easy enough mark. I took a glance through my telescope to ascertain which had the better horns. There was no question, a young bull, side on, was the animal. It was an easy lying-down shot and I hit him through the heart. He gave three or four convulsive bounds down hill, turned the shoulder and then went spinning down the steep slope, a couple of hundred feet, where we found him, without a scratch upon his magnificent golden-white, fleecy hide, nor any damage to his superb horns. The latter rivalled those of the other bull in length though the animal was otherwise smaller in every way. Again we were back in camp with skin and head within the twelve hours, and I fervently thanked the Red Gods for my good fortune.

Such luck could not hold out for ever, and I regret to say that I never saw another takin in the district, though I scoured the country, working Yang San clean off his legs, and reducing myself to skin and bone, and my never very placid temper to rags. It was no use, however, for some unaccountable reason there seemed to be no more takin, in the country. In the course of the next week—when our food supply ran out and the danger of being unable to get back owing to melting snows on the pass, forced us to return to the village at the base of the hills—we never once came across the fresh track of a takin though there were plenty of old ones. I saw nothing of the herds thirty or forty strong that others have written about, and I must state that I worked all the haunts of the beast that Yang San knew of. He led me some tremendous tramps, over the roughest country, and when we finally decided to leave

Pei-gnai-tze for good, he and I left the others, and, with just what we could carry, returned to the main valley by a hazardous and circuitous route, spending a night in a cave by the way, and two of the most tiring days it has been my lot to experience.

However the magnificence of the mountains and valleys, their grandeur and ruggedness, their very stupendousness made those tiring days worth while. Colossal cliffs, over which poured streams of water, falling a thousand feet clear, before, broken into spray, they wetted the rocks below, alternated with steep, hemlock-covered slopes, which took an hour to descend. Deep chasms, snow-filled at their heads, carried roaring torrents to the wider-valleys below. Here we crossed a frozen water-fall, by means of niches cut in the ice by woodsman early in the winter; there a chasm spanned by a few rotting poles. Often a mere tuft of grass or twig of a bush was all that stood between one and death a thousand feet below. At times I could see that even Yang San was nervous, while I frankly admit that it was often only the fear of being thought afraid, which is the greatest fear in the world, that made me attempt the descents whereby we must reach our destination.

At last, after skirting a tremendous valley head, which took three hours, and gave me some of the most hair lifting experiences of my life, we crossed the last ridge and looked down upon the foothills, far below and the stony river bed of the main valley. A cock pheasant called twice. A roedeer could be seen grazing away down on a distant slope. Neither of these occurred at the attitudes we had been living in. They spoke of an old familiar world and were typical of North China, and the mountains of North China.

For the past twelve days I had lived in a world utterly new to me, peopled with strange birds and animals. A terrible world, a stupendous world, but oh! what a wonderful world. Man might visit it, but no man might live in it. It is a reserve for the takin, the parti-coloured bear, the blood pheasant and tragopan, the flying squirrel and the nut-cracker.

As I lay in the warm sun at the top of that last ridge I looked over my shoulder towards the way we had come, and fain would I have



Yang San and the packers at an altitude of 11,000 ft.



A valley in Kansu.



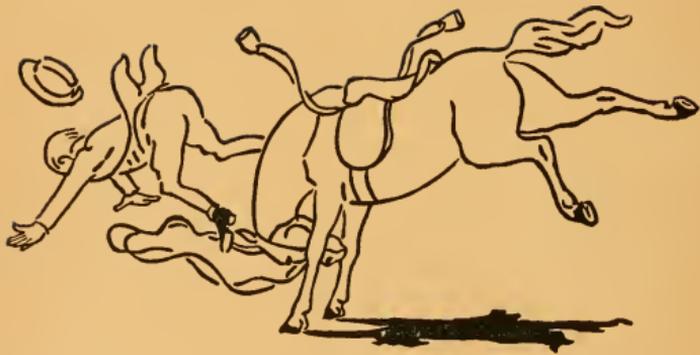
gone back into that wonderful world. I looked forward, and below me the smiling valley beckoned. Besides I was tired and hungry, and there lay rest and food, while in the wild, rugged country I had just left, there was no rest, and food was scarce.

I rose, and, after one last look at those mighty snow-clad peaks, and mist-filled gorges, started down the easy way, back to civilization and the comforts of a dry roof and a camp bed, of chairs and tables and the hundred and one other little things that put man above the animals, and civilized man above the savage.

Three hours later I was drinking a refreshing cup of tea in the house of Wan, while my taxidermist fussed about as over a long lost friend, and the little boys came in to see the foreigner who had actually shot a *Pan-yang* at a range of three *li* (one mile), an exaggeration for which the worthy Yang San was responsible.

Thus ended, as far as any hunting was concerned, a most interesting trip into some of the wildest country that China can produce. I stayed on another five days in the hopes of getting a chance of hunting some of the other kinds of big game, such as pig, serow and goral that inhabited the country, but heavy mists and rain prevented any further work. Finally I decided to give it up and return to Tientsin. The journey back was uneventful occupying twelve strenuous and tedious days, but what matters a few days on the dusty North China roads, when one has in one's baggage specimens of the rarest of all Chinese game, and when one carries memories of happy days hunting in such country as the mountains of Tai-pei-shan.





CHAPTER XX.

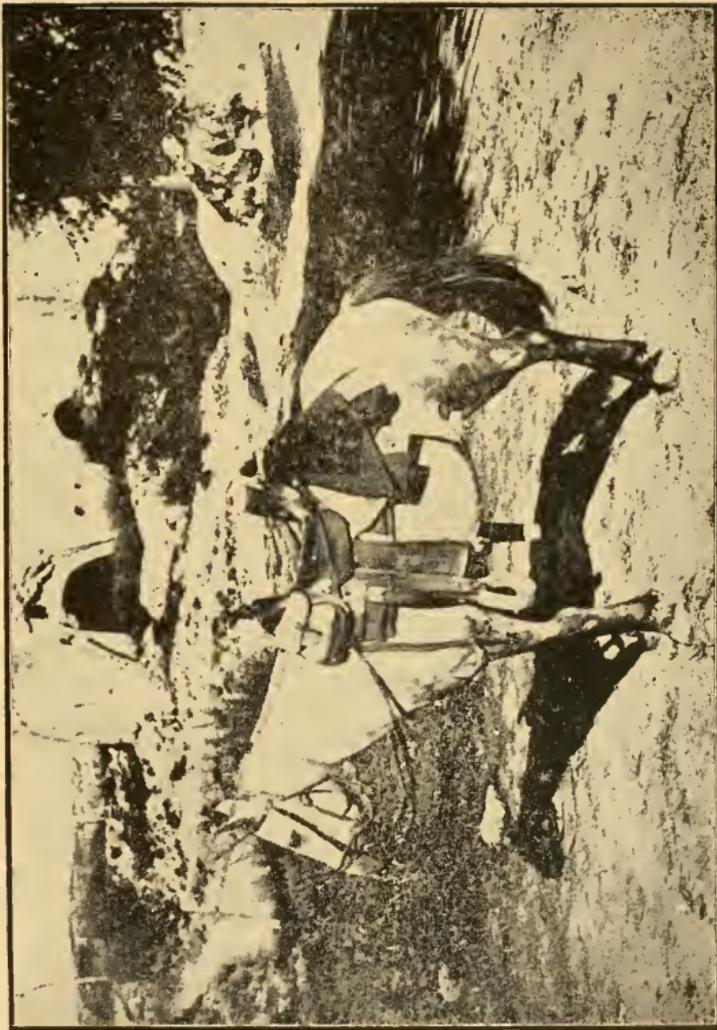


THE MONGOL PONY.

A generous creature a horse is, sensible in some sort of honour; and made most handsome by that which deforms men most—pride.

—*Dr. Fuller.*

Plate 40.



Pawnee Bill with full travelling equipment.



THE MONGOL PONY.



HERE are few Europeans and Americans living in China who have not at some time or other come under the spell of the Mongol pony. Lovers of horseflesh, who come from countries where the horse is one of the most important things in life, to wit such men as your Australian stockman or your Canadian or American cowboy or rancher, or last, but by no means least, your Englishman who has ridden to hounds or gone in for steeplechasing in the Old Country, are inclined to scoff at the Mongol pony as an ungainly, shapeless and much-to-be-despised mount.

Generally the first thing that such an one knows, after having picked out some pony with a reputation for viciousness, in order to show the local riders how such an animal should be handled, is that he is sitting on the softest part of his anatomy on the ground ruefully rubbing the back of his head, while his mount is careering across country and defying all efforts on the part of a pack of mafoos to catch him.

The next thing the unseated horseman realizes is that the pony has 'points,' and he begins to consider it not altogether beneath his dignity to show some interest in the breed, and the end of the matter is he completely surrenders to the charm or whatever it is of the Mongol pony and goes in for a regular stable, and thereafter you will find no more doughty champion of the sturdy little animal's merits.

And yet your true Mongol pony is a stubborn, short-necked, iron-mouthed, hard-gated, bolting, shying, bucking devil! He can crowd more nonsense, tomfoolery and devilry combined into a shorter space of time than anything on four legs, and, when well fed and cared for, generally repays you, if you do not let him know once and for all that

you are master, by becoming the most unmanageable little beast in the world.

He possesses, however, some qualities which make of him one of the most wonderful animals of his kind that the world has ever produced, and which endear him to those who come to know him.

He has an infinite capacity for hard work, is quick as a cat, hardy, can live on stubble if necessary, can endure almost any degree of cold, and withal is intelligent, and, when he comes to know you, as gentle as a kitten. With but few exceptions there is not a spark of meanness or vice in his make up, and most of his pranks and nonsense, when he chooses to indulge in such, are the result of high spirits and playfulness.

But what, perhaps, is the one trait or characteristic, that, more than any other, endears him to us is that he has always got a little bit more in him, a last rally so to speak. You can always ask him for just a little bit more and he will give it, and, what is more, live to tell the tale.

Many and many a time when I have been travelling up country, at the end of a long hard day's ride the need has arisen for a spurt in order to get into some city before the gates were closed for the night, and the little beggar I was riding has answered the call, put his head down, pricked his dainty ears forward along the track and broken into that quick half trot half canter that throws the miles behind, till the grey gate-towers have loomed up ahead in the gathering mists, and we swung through the suburbs, under the dark arch-way and down the streets to our destination.

One such ride in particular is impressed upon my mind. It was at the end of the journey of the Shensi Relief Expedition, when, with a caravan of ninety-three animals, (carts, pack-mules and riding ponies) and one-hundred and fifty refugees, native and foreign, we were nearing the rail-head at Honan Fu. It was a case of wiring to Peking in time to have a special train sent for us, and to do this it was necessary for one of us to ride on ahead of the caravan and do the last two stages in one. We had had a very hard time, having just come through two

belligerent armies, who had stripped the country bare of food and fodder, and what little we had been able to get hold of had been grudgingly doled out by the commissariats of these armies.

I decided to take one companion and make the ride, and for the purpose chose two ponies out of the ten or so animals I had at my disposal, my own little iron grey, and a black, that I knew well and thought could best stand the strain.

We set off at about 8 o'clock in the morning and after clearing the town of Mien-chih Hsien pushed along till noon, doing a steady 20 li ($6\frac{1}{2}$ miles) an hour. The first part of the journey was easy enough, but I could see that the hard travelling and scanty food of the past eight days since leaving Si-an Fu was beginning to tell on the ponies. At Si-an Hsien we gave them a feed and a rub down. I remember anxiously watching every mouthful that my little iron-grey took and I saw that he was really too tired to eat—and we had 80 li (26 miles) to make before 5 o'clock in the afternoon if we were to get into Honan Fu and get our telegrams off that night!

After an hour's rest we set out again, and I made a point of doing 20 li an hour at all costs. The strain was beginning to tell now, and not only on the ponies. My companion was groaning with pains in the back, for on no account would I allow the pace to be altered either to a walk or a canter, and the jog-trot of a tired pony is the most excruciating sensation under the sun.

The last 20 li was a nightmare to all of us. It was simply a matter of keeping blindly on; but we reached Honan Fu with a quarter of an hour to spare. I never saw such woe-begone looking beasts as the ponies were when they got in. They were both yellow with dust; the sweat had dried in cakes on their shaggy coats, their heads hung low, and their ears drooped; but they had done just over fifty-two miles since 8 o'clock in the morning—and after all what more could any one ask?

Under the circumstances this was a creditable enough performance on the part of the ponies, but it pales into insignificance beside the famous race from Tientsin to Peking, a distance of 78 miles, which

took place in February 1903. This race was won by Mr. Fritz Sommer in the remarkable time of 7 hours and 33 minutes, with Mr. C. R. Morling second in 7 hours and 34½ minutes. Both of these gentlemen rode about 168 lbs. It is interesting to note that the time was just about equal to that done by thorough-breds in the race from Brussels to Ostend, which is about the same distance. The ponies in the Tientsin to Peking race were, of course, trained before hand. Both passed the condition tests next morning Mr. Morling's pony taking second prize for condition; while in the following spring meeting both ponies won races, which proves that they were not in any way damaged by the extraordinary strain they had been put to.

There are many other more or less authentic long rides, that have been made up country. One of the best that I know of was made by a member of the Standard Oil Company's staff in Shensi. He left Si-an Fu at 3 o'clock in the morning (in April) and reached Tung-kuan, 330 *li* or 110 miles away before night on a single pony.

Another good ride was that of James Stewart, jr. along the whole length of the Peking Syndicate railway line, a distance of 90 miles, in 26 hours.

When on the Clark Expedition I once did 102 miles in 36 hours, including some 12 hours rest-off. This was no very wonderful feat except that the roads were in extremely bad condition, while with my heavy Mexican saddle, rifle, ammunition, water-bottle, blanket-roll and overcoat I was riding over 200 lbs. weight. The pony, a little iron-grey, called Pawnee Bill, which I have already mentioned, was perfectly fresh next morning, flinging up his heels and dancing about in fine style when I took him on to the station platform at Honan Fu.

The same pony did 105 miles in 39 hours a month later at the end of an eighteen day trek, carrying an even heavier weight.

But Pawnee Bill was, or is, for he is still alive and going strong, an exceptional pony. He is a mixture of Sze-chuan and Mongol, which makes him a very dainty and shapely animal.

He was ill used in his youth, having been put to carrying tobacco between Honan Fu and Si-an Fu. Since the cases of tobacco are one



An Ordos pony.



Large draft ponies, Kansu.



hundred cattiee each, and a regular load is two cases, it means that week in and week out for several years that poor animal carried his two hundred cattiee (260 lbs. roughly) from 25 to 30 miles a day. The result was a little weakness in the back, which used to show itself when he was very tired.

When I first had him he was eight years old, according to Chinese reckoning, which means that he had got all his teeth. That was in 1908, and I used him continuously on my up country trips till the end of 1913. After that I used him for polo for a couple of seasons. At that time he had lost his speed, but there was not an animal that used to play in those games that could nip round quicker than Pawnee Bill could, an advantage which it was only lack of skill prevented my turning to good account.

I also used him for M. I. work, but in the end he went lame, I think through a shoulder or ankle strain, sustained during one of his quick turns at polo, and since then has been unable to carry a heavy weight. However he is quite happy, his present job being to carry a certain young lady in this town, whenever she wishes to go for a canter.

Pawnee Bill all the years I had him never once played out, no matter what was asked of him, and we went through many pretty rough experiences together. Indeed I owe my life to him on one occasion, when, instead of bolting as most ponies would have done, and even he himself was in the habit of doing whenever he found himself loose, he stood quietly by while I was engaged in a life and death struggle with hostile natives, (the murderers of Hazrat Ali). I had disabled my right hand so severely that I could not use my revolver. My rifle was on the saddle. Had Pawnee Bill taken it into his head to bolt, as he well might, it would have been the end of me. Fortunately I was able to overcome my immediate antagonist and mount and get away before the mob got me.

My wife also owes her life to the efforts of a pony, which I bought up country, and which we called Wee McGregor because he was so small. He was one of the most powerful little brutes I ever saw, notwithstanding he stood only 12 hands, and was very small boned.

It was in the dead of winter and we were crossing a frozen river in West Shansi at a point where the current was very deep and swift. Doubtless it was on this account that the ice was rotten, and showed signs, which should have warned us not to attempt the crossing. As I lead the way I could hear the ice cracking. It got worse as we neared the bank, but did not give way till I had reached safety. Then as I landed I heard it break up, and, springing from my pony, I turned to the rescue. I was just in time to see Wee McGregor go in up to his neck with my wife on his back some three yards from the shore! Next moment with a terrific spring he was on dry land, while the broken pieces of ice up-ended one by one and disappeared under the edge of the unbroken part. By rights both pony and rider should have been swept under the ice as well, for the current was running a regular mill-race, and how Wee McGregor ever cleared it I do not know. It is hardly necessary to say that the plucky little animal is also a pensioner, and he spends his days ranging the grasslands of Inner Mongolia where he was born.

As I sit and write many incidents come crowding in upon my memory, but time and space alike forbid their indulgence; as I want to discuss the Mongol pony from a naturalist's point of view. Where does he come from, and what is his origin and ancestry are questions which must interest anybody who has had much to do with him.

Being a Mongol pony he must, of course, come from Mongolia; but Mongolia is a large stretch of country, and the territories occupied by Mongols and their immediate relations even vaster, spreading as they do over nearly the whole of Northern and Central Asia. Now what particular part of that great area is the true home of the Mongol pony such as we know him?

The fact of the matter is there are a number of domestic breeds in Mongolia and adjacent countries, just as there are a number of breeds in Europe, and the pony brought down for racing is as different from an Ili horse, or one of the heavy draft ponies used in North Shansi and westward as an English hunter from a Clydesdale.

But apart from these domestic breeds there are two species, or

possibly only varieties, of wild horses occurring in Western Mongolia and Central Asia, which are undoubtedly the ancestors of the Mongol pony.

These are the Tarpan (*Equus caballus*) or wild horse of Central Asia and Przewalski's wild horse (*Equus przewalskii*) a more mule-like species, also inhabiting the Central Asian Steppes, and apparently Western Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan as well.

The Tarpan is a small dun-coloured animal with a large head, convex profile, thin legs, small hoofs, rather long ears, extensive, though short, partially erect mane, which extends on to the forehead, and a short tail. The mane and tail are reddish brown and there is a stripe of the same colour down the middle of the back, while the muzzle is blackish, and the end of the nose white.

Przewalski's wild horse is also dun-coloured, but has the back darker than the sides and the belly almost white. The mane is short and erect, there is no forelock and the hairs on the tail are long towards the end. The mane and tail are dark, but there is scarcely any sign of a stripe down the middle of the back. This is the animal that the Chinese call the wild-mule, and it is thought by some that it may be a cross between the wild ass or Kulon (*Equus hemionus*) of these parts and the Tarpan. However, this is extremely improbable, for, as every one knows, mules are sterile, even when they are the offspring of the half-wild horses and asses of Chinese Turkestan, where large numbers are bred for use in China, and it is not likely that the two pure wild stocks should cross and produce miscegenic offsprings.

These, then, are the two wild forms from which the Mongol pony in all his variants has descended, and it is interesting to note that there is considerable ground for the belief that the Tarpan is the last survivor of the wild-horses that at one time wandered over Europe as well as Asia, and from which all our domestic breeds originally sprung, including those of America and Australia.

There is no doubt that the Mongol pony is the nearest domestic breed to the Tarpan, particularly the small Ordos breed, amongst which frequently occur duns with short scraggy manes and tails of a dark

colour, and with the dark stripe down the back. These must be throw-backs or reversions to ancestral type, for it is highly improbable that any wild stock has been mixed with the domestic breeds for a very long time; though it seems likely that the wild stocks have from time to time received an infusion of domestic blood, through the escape of tame animals and even herds into the wilder parts of the desert. This doubtless accounts for the occasional appearance of differently coloured colts in the wild herds.

The Mongol pony has at different times and in various parts of the country been crossed with other and better bred stock to his own great improvement; and it is this fact that to a large extent must account for the different breeds already referred to.

Thus the racing ponies, or the best racing ponies, all come from Northern Mongolia, west of Urga. Even those brought down to Lama Miao (Dolonor) generally come from the North in the first place, though local Princes undoubtedly have some very fine stock.

Eastern Mongolia produces a heavy type of pony, useless for racing but very hardy, and splendid for draft purposes. These are the animals largely used in Manchuria, where great extremes of heat and cold are met with and extremely trying weather conditions. It was from this stock that the ponies for Shackleton's and Scott's Antarctic Expeditions were drawn.

As already indicated a breed of very heavy ponies is used in North Shansi for draft purposes. Then there is the small Ordos breed which yields some of the finest pacers to be had in China. These are extremely strong and powerful little beasts, though they seldom stand more than twelve hands.

Further west in Ili there is a famous breed of animals which are so large as to be more horses than ponies. Indeed I have known Ili horses attain a height of over fifteen hands. These animals seldom find their way to the treaty ports, because there is such a demand for them amongst military men and officials in the west. However though fast enough for their size they are not nearly as hardy as the ponies from other parts of Mongolia, nor when it comes to racing can they



Photo by R. S. Clark, Esq.

A 15 hands Ili horse and a large Russian horse from
Chinese Turkestan.



A typical Ili pony.

stand the heavy weights that their extra inches demand. There can be no doubt that this breed has been produced by crossing the more typical Mongol pony with some of the Central-Asian Russian stock.

Besides these Mongolian types there is at least one local Chinese breed that is worthy of mention and that is the Sze-chuan pony. This animal has very small hoofs and ears, a profuse mane and tail and usually stands under eleven hands, though sometimes it goes as much as thirteen. Ponies belonging to this breed can not be mistaken, however, for they are shapely, dainty and have a very quick trot.

Another small breed is the Corean pony, but this is a degenerate, and, like the Sze-chuan pony, is extremely bad tempered and vicious. Mongolia, of course, yields small ponies as well, but they are always extremely gentle and are usually of a stouter, more stocky build.

Mixtures of Mongol and Ili or Mongol and Sze-chuan often occur, the latter generally turning out very well; while one occasionally comes across ponies, especially amongst those brought in from the west, that undoubtedly have a strain of Arab in them.





CHAPTER XXI.

THE SONG OF THE WOLF.

As the dawn was breaking the Sambhur belled—
Once, twice and again!
And a wolf stole back, and a wolf stole back
To carry the word to the waiting pack
And we sought and we found and we bayed on his track
Once, twice and again!

—Kipling.

THE SONG OF THE WOLF.

ONCE in the cool of an autumn evening I was wandering alone along the trackless slopes of a range of foothills in Shansi, enjoying the fresh breeze that came gently down from the mountains, sighing through the tops of the pines, and passing on to the heat-laden plains, spreading peace and a new lease of life after the scorching heat of the day. My rifle lay in the crook of my arm, not because I expected to shoot anything, but because the old weapon had become a sort of companion to me, and it made me feel more a part of the wilds to have it with me.

The sun had just set in a blaze of gold and red, and over the plains below the blue mists of evening were gathering. I was thinking of nothing in particular, my

mind and senses lulled as it were by the resinous odour of the pines, and the aromatic smell of the azalia bushes that I brushed aside as I strolled along. Suddenly there broke upon the stillness the most appalling chorus of yelps and snarls and long wailing cries, that it is possible to imagine. Wolves! I felt the skin of my back creep as I quietly cocked my rifle, and looked round for the cause of the blood-curdling din. But wait! Was it such a din? Was not there something sweet, something wildly beautiful, something ineffably sad in that rude medley? As I listened, fascinated, the snarls seemed to die out of those voices and instead wail after wail went ringing through the valleys and ravines and over the gentle slopes, drowning the sighing of the wind in the pines, echoing and re-echoing from crag to crag till it sounded as though all the lost souls in hades were mourning their wretchedness and misery.



No one who has caught the sob in that most beautiful of modern pieces "The Perfect Day" played by a stringed orchestra can fail to realize the heart-break and longing that rings through it. Just so with this song of the wilds, sung by a couple of wolves in the stillness of that autumn evening. There was music in every line of it. The voices, with all their human quality rose and sunk and rose again, quavering off almost into silence and then ringing out again in full-throated challenge and defiance against some cruel doom. Now they were in unison and now in the most perfect harmony, that set every nerve tingling and thrilling to the exquisite vibrations. It was sad, unutterably sad, sadder than any human voice. There was a catch in it, a heart-break that told, as one of our ablest modern writers, with his deep insight into and sympathy with the ways of the wilds, has said, of countless ages of suffering and anguish. All the pent up misery of their ancestors, since the red dawn of creation, seemed to be seeking expression in the song of those two wolves, as they set out once more from their lair to harry and tear and kill. They knew to the fill what few of us know, and that is hunger and thirst and bitter bitter cold, yet I do not think that was altogether why they sang. They sang because they loved to sing, and I listened to their song, and to this day the odour of pine trees or the sound of the wind in their branches, or of certain kinds of orchestral music brings back to my memory that wild song of the foot-hills.

The pink died out of the western sky as I crept stealthily forward, for I wished to see the singers. The gloom of coming night settled down over mountain and valley, but I caught one glimpse of two grey forms sitting facing each other, their noses in the air, pouring forth their wild music. Then a twig snapped under my knee or I displaced a pebble, and the shadows vanished. Later as I turned homeward I heard those voices again away down the valley, but this time there was a difference; a ring of pure savagery had crept in, and I knew that the wolves had scented their prey.

The next evening I was at the spot again, with the hope, I am half ashamed to admit, of getting a shot at the wolves. I stole quietly

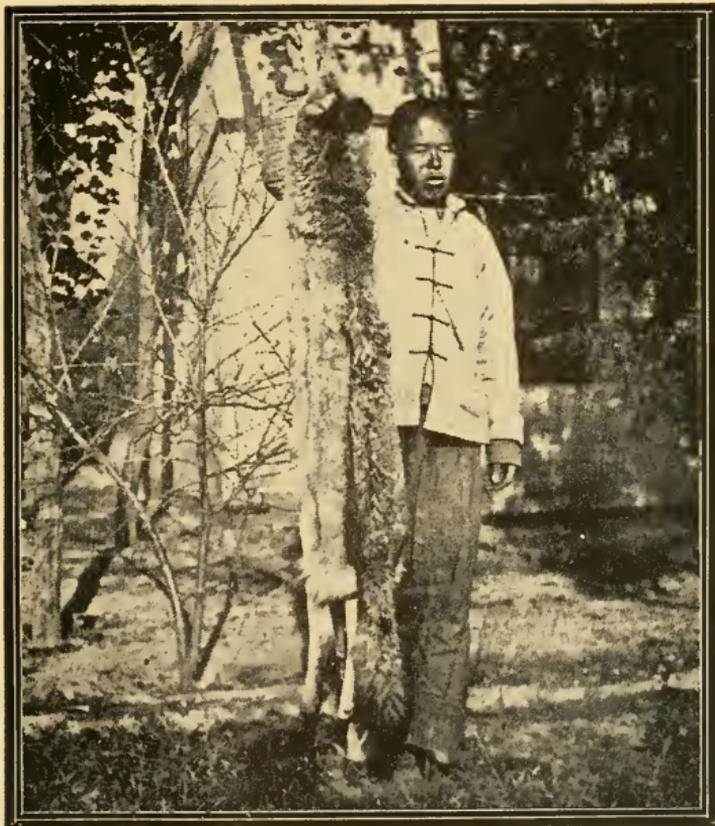


Photo by Dr. P. H. Atwood.

The skin of a large wolf shot by Dr. Atwood near Fen-chow Fu in Shansi.

down to a certain terrace of blue and purple shale that overlooked a deep and narrow gorge, whence it seemed to me the wolves had come the night before. I reached the terrace and walked quietly along it keeping a sharp look out, but saw nothing. What made me look round I can not say, but I did, and there a little way up the slope I had just descended were the two wolves, one a monster, quietly smelling my trail. I dropped on one knee, took a quick aim and fired. The big he-wolf sprang straight up into the air as a spurt of dust flew up under his belly, then, before I could get in another shot, he had dived out of sight into a small water-cut, whence he emerged a few seconds later going like the wind up the slope opposite me. He stopped as he reached the top of the ridge, where his mate joined him, turned round, had a long look at me as though taking mental note of my appearance for future use, and then the two of them loped quietly away.

Next morning, before it was light, I was waiting on the slope at the mouth of the gorge, for I felt sure that the wolves had their lair somewhere in it, and would come back from the plains up the main valley. I was right in my conjecture, for I saw both of them, but in each case it was only a glimpse, for they saw me at the same time, and like true hunters took cover at once. I searched the gorge for the lair several times, but never discovered it.

I knew the great he-wolf of old, for the two preceding winters I had hunted on the plains below, and had frequently come across a very large track that measured four and a half inches against the three and a half to four inches of the average wolves of the district. The track I measured the evening I had my shot at the big wolf was four and a half inches. I saw him again twice in the next few days, once a long way off, and once near enough to make him jump with a dose of bird shot, but the following winter his track was on the plains again, and there he may be to this day, for all I know to the contrary, for I gave up hunting in that district soon after.

Since that time I have seen many wolves in different parts of China, and many a time have their songs lulled me to sleep, or mingled in my dreams.

Once while camped in a valley in the early winter in Western Shansi my companions and I were wakened by the familiar sounds, but this time it was a particularly fine performance to which we listened. There were three wolves sitting just outside the camp, all indulging their vocal powers to the full, while the dogs in a neighbouring village joined in the chorus with yelps and barks that only added to the weird effect. It was a wonderful song. Sometimes one of the wolves would be baying a solo. Starting low down in the scale he would gradually rise higher and higher, fall and rise again, and then the other two would join in and the dogs would redouble their furious barking as though at the beck of some unseen baton, till the gamut of sound reached an almost nerve-wracking pitch, and then would die down again to a duet or solo on the part of the wolves. I lay and listened for several minutes till I could resist the temptation no longer, when I slipped out of bed into a sheepskin coat, grabbed my rifle and crept out of the tent to try and shoot one of the wolves. They were off, however, the moment I showed myself for it was a bright moonlight night.

While in the forest district of West Shansi with my wife, I had several experiences with wolves, but somehow my luck was always out, and I failed to secure one. I hit one out of a pack of six, but it escaped into the brush, where it was picked up next day by a shepherd, who sold its skin to a passing pedlar.

It was while on a trip in Shensi that I got my first wolf. Our party were just leaving a place named Kan-chuan Hsien early one morning. The surrounding country was infested with wolves: in fact one had been shot the evening before as we approached the town. Knowing the district I rode off the mainroad with one of my companions, taking a path along the side of the valley which passed some graves, in the hopes of coming across a wolf. We had not gone far when I caught sight of one standing beside a grave where he had evidently been digging for a meal. There he stood, his shaggy coat shining white and yellow in the morning sunlight, his head turned towards the sound of the mule-bells across the valley. Evidently he had not discovered us riding up on his right. I jumped off my pony, and, in less

time than it takes to tell, had taken aim and fired. The wolf went down on his face snarling and worrying at his left fore-leg. After a short struggle he regained his feet, only to receive a second bullet which laid him out for good. I was very proud of myself as I carried my prize to the mule-train and had a photograph taken, for not many Europeans can boast of having shot a North China wolf. He is the most cunning of all the four-footed denizens of the wilds, and though frequently seen is seldom secured.

Nearly always he sees you long before you have seen him, and, though he may appear indifferent to, or ignorant of your presence, is really watching your every move, like a cat watching a mouse, and the first sign of evil intent on your part is the signal for him to carry out some simple piece of strategy that places him in safety.

Dr. Atwood has shot several wolves in the Fen-chou Fu district in Shansi, where they are rather plentiful; but then everyone is not a first class shot with a rifle. Usually when one meets a wolf, whether it be on the plains or in the mountains, one gets so excited that one's aim is uncertain, and the wolf makes good his escape with nothing more than a bad fright, a bullet having kicked up the dust under his tail or clipped a tuft of hair off his back.

I could tell of many such failures, but their memory is painful; for, in spite of being such an admirer of his singing, I would rather shoot a wolf any day than many another less common animal.

The reason for this is that he is, after all, the sworn enemy of man, and it is not always, or even often that his song has anything but a hideous menace in it to those that hear it.

In Central Shansi, where wolves are unusually plentiful, the natives will tell you ugly tales of how one of these animals will sit outside the door of a hut and wail like a human being in distress, and the moment the occupant of the hut steps out to render aid to the sufferer, will spring upon him and kill him.

It is in these parts also that the wolves become so bold during the winter that they will enter the village streets, often in broad daylight, and snatch children from under the eyes of their parents.

I was brought up amongst these people and their every day tales dealt with the ravages of wolves, and many of the faces of my playmates bore cruel scars inflicted by these animals. Naturally I have come to look upon a wolf as an animal to be killed without mercy whenever the chance offers.

Many terrible tales are told of the depredations of these animals, one of the worst being that of a widow who was living in a lonely part of a straggling village near Hsin Chow. It was New Year's day and she had dressed her two children to go paying calls with her. She left them sitting on the *kang* while she went out of the hut to get a little brush-wood or something. The door was slightly ajar and a wolf that had evidently been hanging round watching his opportunity slipped into the hut, siezed one of the children and made off. The distracted mother gave the alarm and tottered along after the wolf as best she could on her small feet, but it was no use, and she and the other villagers finally gave it up, returning to the hut just in time to see a second wolf carrying off the other child.

The wolf is distributed all over China, as well as Mongolia, Thibet and Manchuria, but in none of these places does he go about in large packs, as do the wolves of Siberia and Russia.

I have met wolves in the hills to the north of the Yang-tze in the San-chieh district on the Tsin-pu line, and also in the Chinkiang hills. Indeed a number have been killed in the latter district, one or two quite recently. It was in the Chinkiang hills that I last heard the wolf-song, and I remember how it mingled in my dream, rising and falling like some wild music, slowly bringing me back to a sense of my surroundings from some far off enchanted land. Next morning when a party of us went pig driving a fine wolf was put up within half a mile of the village at which I had been staying. Though one of the party hit this animal he escaped into the dense brush, where doubtless he died from his wounds.

In Mongolia the wolves are very large and in winter have a fine thick coat of an unusually light colour. I remember getting a shot at one of these animals while sheep hunting in the mountains of North-



Photo by K. T. McCoy, Esq.

Wolf Cub from Honan.



Photo by Morgan Palmer, Esq.

Wolf shot by the author in North Shensi.

western Shansi; but, as so often happens with wolves, he jumped for cover just at the critical moment, and when next I saw him he was loping away well out of range.

In reference to the cunning of the wolf let me recount an experience which I had in Shensi while out trapping for specimens. I had with me four large steel traps of native manufacture, and had set them out in likely places in the hope of getting a wolf, but without success. One day I discovered a regular wolf-path, where the tracks told me wolves passed nightly to and fro between a deep ravine and the flat valley-bottom, so I set my traps close to this. I hid them carefully, and hung a dead pigeon in such a position that to get it a wolf stood a good chance of stepping into one of the traps. Next morning the pigeon was gone, while the earth that covered the ends of the springs of the traps had been scraped away, the exposed steel acting as a danger signal to any wolf that chanced along. All about in the dust were the tracks of a large wolf, showing how he had walked round the traps, examining the situation from every point of view, finally stepping carefully between two of them, and taking the pigeon. Many other animals are capable of securing the bait from a trap, no matter how cunningly laid, but I know of none that would take the trouble or even have the sagacity to expose the danger for the sake of its comrades.

Given his freedom the wolf is undoubtedly one of the most intelligent of animals, but his fear of man is so great that in captivity he becomes a cringing fool. Taken very young, or when born in captivity, and brought up away from his parents, a wolf-cub displays every whit as much sagacity as an intelligent dog.

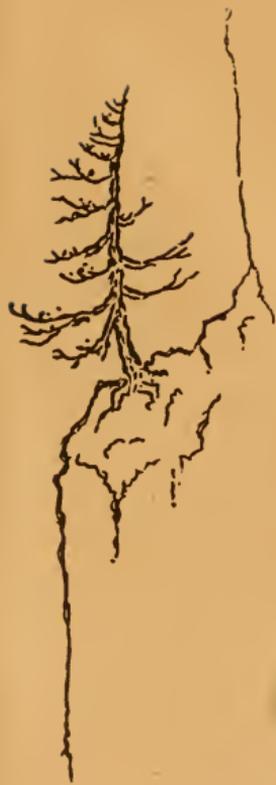
I owned one once, which I bought from the Zoological Gardens at Clifton, Bristol. The little animal became very fond of me, and when I left England and was forced to leave him behind, he pined away, refusing to eat or sleep and finally died.

The greatest enemy of man in the wild state, the wolf becomes, when tame, man's greatest friend, for there can be no doubt that many of the breeds of dogs and hounds used by us to-day have their origin in a wolf stock. His savage and blood-thirsty nature becomes gentle

and loving: he will guard with his life that which he would at one time have torn in pieces and devoured. Yet this is not so strange, for, as all who are familiar with the wolf and his ways in the wilds will tell you, he has a naturally loving disposition. He loves his mate as no other animal knows how to love, and not only does he love her but he is faithful to her as long as she lives. He loves his cubs, and will fight to the death in their defence, or will use the utmost cunning in warding off danger.

Perhaps it is just these qualities in the wolf that make him an animal of such general interest to the human being, but to me there is also that wonderful voice of his, and I never feel so much in the wilderness, or so much a part of the wilds as when I hear rising on the midnight air, or echoing through the mountains and valleys the long-drawn, wailing, sobbing song of the wolf.







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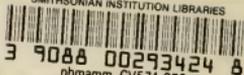
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