

## HUNTING THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN GOAT.

OUR knowledge of the various sub-departments of natural history has, with few exceptions, kept on a line with the wonderful progress made in the pictorial art, that is so important to it. One of these exceptions, an instance in which our knowledge has remained somewhat behind the time, relates to the animal which forms the subject of this sketch—the *Aplocerus montanus*, known to the frontiersman and to the fur-trader of the extreme North-west as the white goat of the Rocky Mountains. So much myth is interwoven with the history of this animal, so little that is authentic is known of it, that an account of its habitus and appearance, and also a description of its chase,—it being to-day, without exception, the rarest game animal on the North American continent,—may perhaps be not without interest.

Before we proceed, let it be recorded that its popular name is an incorrect one. It is no goat, and strictly speaking it does not inhabit the Rocky Mountains, for its home is entirely confined to the more or less detached mountain chains that occupy the Pacific slopes of the main system of the Rocky Mountains. It is only found in western Montana, the northernmost portions of Idaho and Oregon, in Washington Territory, and especially in British Columbia. No authentic instance is known to me of its appearing south of 45° north latitude, while its range in the opposite direction seems to extend to the inhospitable Arctic regions. The exterior of this grotesque member of the Cavicornia, or hollow-horned family, is not very unlike that of the domestic goat, much magnified in size; but a closer examination of its structure, of the singularly heavy and deep body, of the skull and horns, of the curved nose, of the soft, silky under-hairs of its coat, and other not less characteristic features, shows, it would seem, very clearly that the affinities of our animal are more with the antelope than with the goat or sheep.

Its history is one of peculiar interest. So far as I know, specimens of the *Aplocerus montanus* are to be found only in three cities: in London, where a very undersized and wretchedly stuffed specimen does not redound to the honor of the British Museum or of English taxidermists; a better one in the Leyden Museum; and two fair representatives (one male and one female) in the National Museum at Washington.

Fathers Piccolo and de Savatiera first discovered the animal on the Pacific slope. Vancouver some ninety years ago brought home a mutilated skin of one as a great prize. The first scientific account of it was published in the year 1816 by the well-known naturalist de Blainville; while the Philadelphia naturalist Ord, a few years later, published a long account of this mysterious animal, basing his theories upon materials of a somewhat scanty description, consisting, as we are informed, of "the scalp with one of the horns attached to it and the skin without head or legs, it having served an Indian for a cloak." It is not surprising, therefore, to find that, not even excepting the famous *Ovis Polii* of central Asia, an animal which no European has as yet killed, there is to-day probably no game animal existing regarding which our information is so vague, or which is known to the naturalist under so many different generic names. Of the twenty-three scientific authorities who have, so far as I have been able to follow the subject, written on this animal, none had ever seen one alive, and only four had ever examined a stuffed specimen; but they nevertheless have bestowed thirteen different generic names upon it, some making of it a sheep, others classing it as a goat, while others, again, ranked it as a chamois. As a singular coincidence, it is to be remarked that the first really scientific classification, that of de Blainville, has, after all, obtained the confirmation of our great living authorities, such as Professor Spencer F. Baird, who places this animal among the antelopes with the distinctive generic name of *Aplocerus montanus*, though the two specimens in the National Museum at Washington are still on exhibition under the patronymic given to it more than half a century ago by Ord, *i. e.*, *Majama montana*.

As a popular name mountain antelope or antelope-goat might be suggested. Fortunately the animal is so little known to the general public that few except Hudson Bay Company trappers will have to unlearn its old name, and even among them there are not very many who have ever seen a live one. Since the days of Lewis and Clarke, who, by the way, brought home with them the old Indian cloak specimen, on the strength of which Mr. Ord built up such profound speculations, the traveler in those far-off mountain regions, if he does not make their chase his

special object and has not a goodly meed of patience to stick to his purpose, has but little chance of "glimpsing" this rare inhabitant of the very highest altitudes of the inaccessible peaks. It lives exclusively above timber-line, and is not only in this peculiarity an exception to all other game on the North American continent, but also because it remains all the year round in the same place, which no other wild animals do, their summer and winter range being either in entirely different zones, as in the case of the bison or buffalo, elk, and mule-deer, or rendered distinct by a considerable difference in the altitude, as in the case of the bighorn. Both these features remove the antelope-goat from the ken of the ordinary traveler, and make it difficult even for the ardent sportsman to discover its real home.

For three consecutive years I hunted on the breezy mountain ranges of Wyoming, Colorado, Idaho, and eastern Montana, living for months at altitudes over ten thousand feet; but I failed utterly to find this mysterious game elsewhere than in the conversation of romancing trappers and guides, a circumstance that created in my mind a decided tendency to look upon all "goat" stories with a good deal of suspicious reserve. I heard a great number of such tales. Men told me that they had shot, knifed, lassoed, stalked, staked in pitfall, and otherwise "gone for" the prized game, and that in their turn they had been gored, spitted, "treed," butted, trampled on, and generally roughly handled by redoubtable old rams; and though the Britisher in this instance declined to be "filled up boots and all" with these hoary old myths of the ultra Western type, they yet generated in me an irrepressible desire to get at the bottom of these wonderful natural-history revelations. I determined that my next annual visit to the Far West was to be exclusively devoted to goat-hunting; and a letter I received in May, 1882, from a reliable friend and countryman residing in western Montana, declaring that he had actually seen, not a live, but, what was next best, a dead mountain goat, made me pack my trunks and engage passage in hot haste.

Two or three weeks later I was in Butte City, that most promising of mining towns, the future "Leadville" of Montana Territory. Here I "outfitted," and, joined by my aforementioned English friend, we were in a few days on our way to the Bitter Root Mountains. Our party had a business-like look about it; the men and the seven or eight horses were old friends of former seasons, when their hardy endurance had been put to very severe tests in expeditions of five or six months' duration to the

few then remaining wild corners in the mountainous West. Our minds were of equally business-like bent. We wanted goat, and goat we would get or perish in the attempt. As the country we were about to visit was strange to us, we decided, on reaching the last outpost of civilization, to hire a local guide acquainted with the trails that led up to the foot of the chain on which we had reliable information the animals had been seen and even killed.

It was an isolated little mining camp, and the dozen or so of inhabitants, all "old-time" frontiersmen, were one and all willing to take their oath that they had slaughtered goats since they could handle shooting-irons. We picked out three from which *the* man was to be selected. The choice was not the easiest. The first was known as the fellow "who could stand more rest than any other man in the territory;" or, in other words, was supposed to be the laziest man in Montana. The second was reputed to be decidedly a "bad" man, an old-time Virginia City vigilante, known throughout the country as "Judge Neversweat," on account of the equanimity of mind exhibited by him at a certain most critical moment of his life, when he held at bay, with an *unloaded* revolver, four doomed and desperate men, thirsting for his life and their liberty. Judge Neversweat evinced much anxiety to act as our guide across the Bitter Root Mountains, every foot of which he professed to know from his "prospecting" days. "We'll have a blank good time,—you bet your bedrock flume on *that*," he said, adding, *sotto voce*, "anyhow, as long as the whisky don't peter out." His indignation when informed that this was not likely to occur, for the good reason that on principle we never took whisky on our shooting-trips, was at first rather amusing, then startling, to behold. The mere idea of a good time without unlimited whisky was a dire imposition, an insult to frontier manhood. He was too angry to give vent to the usual unbridled flow of bad language; his otherwise loud voice toned down to an angry snarl, his eyes glittered, his form grew erect, his whole being assumed an austere dignified air; in one word, Judge Neversweat became polite. It was a mood the half-dozen mountaineers, silent witnesses of this scene, seemed to understand and to fear, for they all suddenly discovered they had business elsewhere, leaving us, as I heard one mutter, "to our own funeral." Then spoke up the Judge: "Gentlemen, let Judge Neversweat *po*-lately inform you, on the first call of his hand, that this yar camp aint lost no goat; and if this yar straddle aint going to find your approval, Judge Neversweat's record aint one

that'll stand a second call." Our egregious exhibition of insular prejudice cost us some odd dollars. Judge Neversweat had not, we found, included a call to the nearest saloon among those incompatible with his "record." Of the three men from whom we decided to pick our guide, the third man enjoyed a more harmless reputation — none else than that he was "the biggest liar this side of the Rocky Mountains." Him we chose, for his idiosyncrasy was decidedly the most harmless. Aside from the fact that his qualification to act as our guide was about the biggest of all big lies he had ever fabricated, he proved a willing fellow and a good cook; so while we did his guiding he did our cooking, a combination satisfactory to both parties.

A peculiarity of the several great mountain-chains of the Northern Pacific slope, such as the Cascade, Bitter Root, Cœur d'Alène, and Selkirk ranges, which are the principal homes of the antelope-goat, are the vast stretches of exceedingly dense forests which clothe their precipitous slopes up to an altitude of nine or ten thousand feet in unbroken and perfectly trailless masses. The Bitter Root peaks make no exception, and this we saw when, after two days' travel through a partly open country, we reached the foot of the chain and camped on one of the last open grassy spaces. At an early hour the following morning we entered the forest, hoping by a long day's scramble to reach timber-line; for the country looked comparatively easy to cross, and we could not imagine that, with our pack animals trained to such work, we possibly could fail to penetrate the dark-green maze that mantled the slopes in a primeval luxuriance of growth. But the forests of the Pacific slope are awkward to deal with, and as our guide had begun his duties by telling us, just as a sample of his powers in the way of yarning, that he knew a trail which would lead us in six or seven hours up to timber-line, we spent more than three days in getting through the woods, intersected as they were by bits of burnt forests and numerous extensive "dead-falls" of trees thrown pell-mell over, under, and astraddle of each other by gales or avalanches. There are few more temper-trying moments than when you find yourself "stalled" in such a "dead-fall." After an hour's hard and incessant work with two of the heavy axes, you have managed to penetrate one or two hundred yards into the labyrinth of fallen trunks; now creeping under an uprooted tree slanting against a frail support, a slight push liable to send it crashing down on you; then "stomaching" a prostrate log three or four feet in height, and by angry tugs and strong

language coaxing your horse to follow you, which he does by a grotesque buck-like leap, putting to a sore test the knots of the lash-ropes that fasten his pack; here clearing away with your "barked" hands a tangle of "snags," as the sharp clumps of branches are called, which protrude like daggers from the fallen giant trees; then cautiously testing the miry ground in spots of a most dangerous character, liable to engulf the traveler and his horse. After perhaps an hour's work, you have reached the center of the strip of "dead-fall," when suddenly you find yourself brought up by a formidable barrier of trunks higher than your head and garnished with a nasty *chevaux de frise* of snags of more than ordinary density. It is impossible to penetrate it, and you turn to your right and then to your left vainly seeking an outlet, but there is none visible. Nothing remains but to turn back and retrace your steps; but, lo! a similarly desperate state of things faces you, and for some minutes you fail to find the exact place where you crossed those huge logs or piles of pole timber; for, as you happen to be on ground sloping downward, the side of the barrier which you now face is much higher and therefore more impassable than the one you breasted on your way into the snare. You are "corralled," and without the aid of the axe, wielded by sturdy arms, you cannot possibly escape. In burnt timber the difficulties are much the same, if not greater; for the conflagration, caused by elementary disasters and fanned by fierce gales, has swept the forests so fast that many of the burnt trees are left standing upright, requiring but a slight push to send them to the ground. Here the pack-horses, with their unwieldy packs, become a source of imminent danger. You cannot lead them, for there are not enough men; they refuse to be driven, and so you have to let them pick their way at their own sweet will, bumping against fragilely poised trees, which come down with such a crash as to spread dismay among men and beasts.

Notwithstanding all these difficulties that hamper traveling, these upland forests are very beautiful, and they grow more beautiful the further north-west you penetrate. The trees are grand old silver firs, larch, and white pine, clothed as you approach timber-line with the fantastic "beard of the Alps," pendent tresses of grizzly moss, often more than a yard in length, that festoon the gnarled branches of the larger trees. When the fierce winter storms sweep through these elevated forests, these tresses wave to and fro in a weirdly fantastic manner. The flora, too, is more varied than on the eastern ranges; the beautiful, inimitable blue of the modest Alpine

gentians, sunk in their mossy cushions, the delicate perfume of the wood orchids, and the trailing creepers of the clematis, all remind one of the Alpine uplands of the Old World. On approaching timber-line, where the dense forest scatters out, patches of snow, the last shreds of the deep solemn pall that had covered living nature for the past seven months, began to show in the gullies and ravines. Toward the evening of the fourth day we at last stood on the breezy slopes of the great chain, at least ten thousand feet over the broiling Atlantic and Pacific coasts. One or two avalanches, where the snow was still piled up thirty feet high, had to be crossed before we reached a small rock-embowered lake, where further progress with the pack-train became impossible. It was a lovely sheet of water, on three sides inclosed by huge walls of rock that rise sheer from the water's edge to an altitude of twelve or fifteen hundred feet. Thrice beautiful it appeared that day to the parched men and animals of our party, and it needed not the usual call to camp to strew an inviting bit of smooth emerald-green meadow, lapped by the water of the lake, with the loads of the horses; and the next minute the jaded animals were rolling on the refreshingly cool turf, and the "bosses" were throwing aside their scant garments to dive from a great protruding bowlder into the limpid depth of the lake.

But where are the goats? the reader will exclaim. They are nearer than we think, for presently there is a hushed cry of amazement, and all eyes are turned to the top of the great walls that inclose the farther end of the tarn. There, on the knife-back edge of these singularly bold cliffs, we see, clearly outlined against the blue horizon, some five or six snow-white apparitions, which, examined through powerful glasses, prove to be the long-looked-for, much-doubted mountain antelope. We have come, we have seen, but we have yet to conquer.

In the waning light of the afternoon and evening an unsuccessful stalk was tried, for the wind was unfavorable, and the game had probably seen us. So no wonder that long before we had climbed the knife-back ridge, which on reaching it was found to be broader than it appeared from below, our quarry had vanished. The whole ground, however, was tracked up by the sharp and unmistakable impressions of their hoofs, while long, tangled masses of the woolly hair of their winter coat, which they evidently were just then shedding, festooned the rocks, against which the animals were apparently in the habit of rubbing themselves. From these and other signs we conjectured that the giddy ridge we were standing

on, with tremendously deep, sheer precipices falling off on both sides, was a favorite resort of our game. And so it proved to be, for nowhere else were they so frequently to be seen as on precisely such ridges, the very highest point of the whole chain.

To me this mysterious animal was particularly attractive as being the North American representative of my favorite game in the Old World, the chamois, on the tracks of which I have spent a goodly portion of my leisure for the last fifteen years; and much as the two animals, belonging as they do to perfectly distinct species, differ from each other, there is yet about their chase a striking resemblance, while many of the most memorable details of their surroundings are almost identical. For the next few days my comrades saw little of me; and when after dusk I did return to camp, hungry and fagged by twelve or fourteen hours' rock-climbing of the stiffest nature, the morrow's early stalk made me seek my cozy sleeping-bag at an early hour. Our party got, all told, fifteen of these rare animals, of which nine fell to my rifle.

In the Bitter Root Mountains stalking, or still-hunting, is about as difficult as it can be; for the slopes, where they are not actual precipices, are covered with masses of *débris*, loose slabs, and bowlders, with the sharpest corners and edges imaginable. On this ground it is nearly impossible to approach game noiselessly. Let you be never so careful and circumspect, using knees, toes, and fingers in the most approved fashion, you cannot proceed very far before a slab, poised in a secure-looking position, will rattle away from under you, and in nine cases out of ten start a miniature avalanche of stones, awakening the echoes among the impending cliffs. I have found, however, that so used do the denizens of these rocky wastes get to such noises, from their own inability of moving over these slopes without starting rocks, that, so long as they do not see or wind you, they will not be alarmed. The antelope-goat is a singularly fearless animal, while its innate curiosity will lead it to brave dangers from which most other wild animals will flee.

Let me relate one incident that will prove this. I had sighted a solitary ram grazing on one of the frequent amphitheater-shaped steep slopes, but well down about the middle of the declivity, while I was on the top of the knife-backed ridge. Unfortunately the goat had seen me, and had taken to his hoofs, but in a very leisurely manner, keeping in his flight a course parallel to mine, *i. e.*, approaching neither the top nor the bottom of the slope. I judged it to be some



CROSSING THE TIMBER-LINE.

five hundred and fifty yards down to him, and my trial shot, taken very steadily while he was making one of his frequent stands, and which missed him a little to the left, proved my estimation to be fairly correct. I hoped to get nearer, so I reserved my fire, and for the next three-quarters of an hour a most exciting steeple-chase took place, I following the ridge, which was of the usual impossible character, while the ram pursued, as I have said, a parallel course, keeping half-way up the slope. The chamois would have put himself beyond distance in a few minutes. True, the path was not a smooth one; indeed, it was as rough as it well could be, huge bowlders, piled over each other or separated by dark yawning chasms, generally too broad even for a goat's muscles, making progress very slow. But no doubt there was a good deal of fooling about the old ram's proceedings; for from time to time he would squat down and take a rest, much amused, no doubt, by the frantic scrambles of his breathless pursuer above him, clearly outlined against the horizon, and feeling very sure that the shaking aim would be anything but dangerous to him. In this he

was right; for eleven times in the course of that singular race did I throw myself flat on some handy rock, and take as deliberate aim as my shaking hands, trembling from the exertion in the trying atmosphere of these high altitudes, would allow. Eleven times the bullet whizzed past him, once detaching a fragment of rock, which must have hit him, for I could distinctly perceive him make a side jump. I was very nearly at "my wind's end," completely fagged out by my run, which, as I looked back, I saw covered very nearly the whole vast semicircle of the ridge, and which, as I afterward found, was keenly watched with glasses by my friend and some of the men from their camp, far down the mountain-side. By this time I had one cartridge left. Hunter and hunted were approaching the end of the semicircular ridge, where it fell off in one enormous precipice, a configuration of the ground that, of course, would shortly terminate the chase, a continuation being only feasible to winged creatures. The ram, still about four hundred yards off, was steering for a tooth-like crag, separated from the main ridge by a profound abyss.



STALKING.

Here evidently he felt himself secure, and as I watched him sit down very leisurely to take in all the fun of my defeat, I felt very uncharitable sentiments escaping my parched and breathless lips. A quarter of an hour's much-needed breathing-spell allowed me at this juncture to survey the ground. The distance separating us was about four hundred yards. It would have been folly to risk my last cartridge at this long range. The ram was evidently feeling very much at home, and (as I could easily see with my glasses) kept his gaze steadfastly fixed upon me.

The formation of the ground, as I presently discovered, favored the employment of the following ruse—which, as the sequel will show, proved successful. Retiring behind the top of the ridge, I took off my canvas jumper and hat, dressed up a handy stone with these garments, and, slowly lifting it on the top of the ridge, deposited it there, in plain sight of the watchful ram. Then I disappeared, and made a long detour, including a disagreeable creep along a ledge, where my progress was tantalizingly slow,—for the precarious nature of the shelving rock, in places only a foot or two in width, with a deep

precipice at my side, obliged me to take off my boots and stockings so as to gain a surer footing, while the wind, unpleasantly cold, pierced my single upper garment (a flannel shirt), saturated with perspiration, making me shiver and shake. I finally managed to weather the great buttress of rock at a considerably lower level, and to approach the ram from a direction he little expected, to within one hundred and fifty yards or so. It was an anxious minute as I lifted my head inch by inch over a projecting ledge, and there, in plain view, saw my game, his gaze still fixed upward at my dummy. For full five minutes I lay there; what with the excitement and my breathlessness, I instinctively felt that every minute thus gained would bring my bullet an inch nearer to my quarry. When finally my Express pealed forth its sharp crack, the ram was my meat.

A most singular, not to say fantastic, habit of the antelope-goat is worthy of special notice. It is the practice of sitting up on his haunches like a dog, and when anything startles him to squat back and raise his front legs from the ground, much in the position of a "begging" poodle. The hide and hair on the rump of old

animals are quite worn and much thicker than elsewhere. On one occasion I approached such squatting goats to within sixty yards.

The antelope-goat attains now and again a very formidable size. An old ram, killed by a

horns, frequently inflicting ghastly wounds. On such occasions they are most dangerous to approach, for they are perfectly reckless, and have fierce courage, great muscular activity, and wonderful tenacity of life.

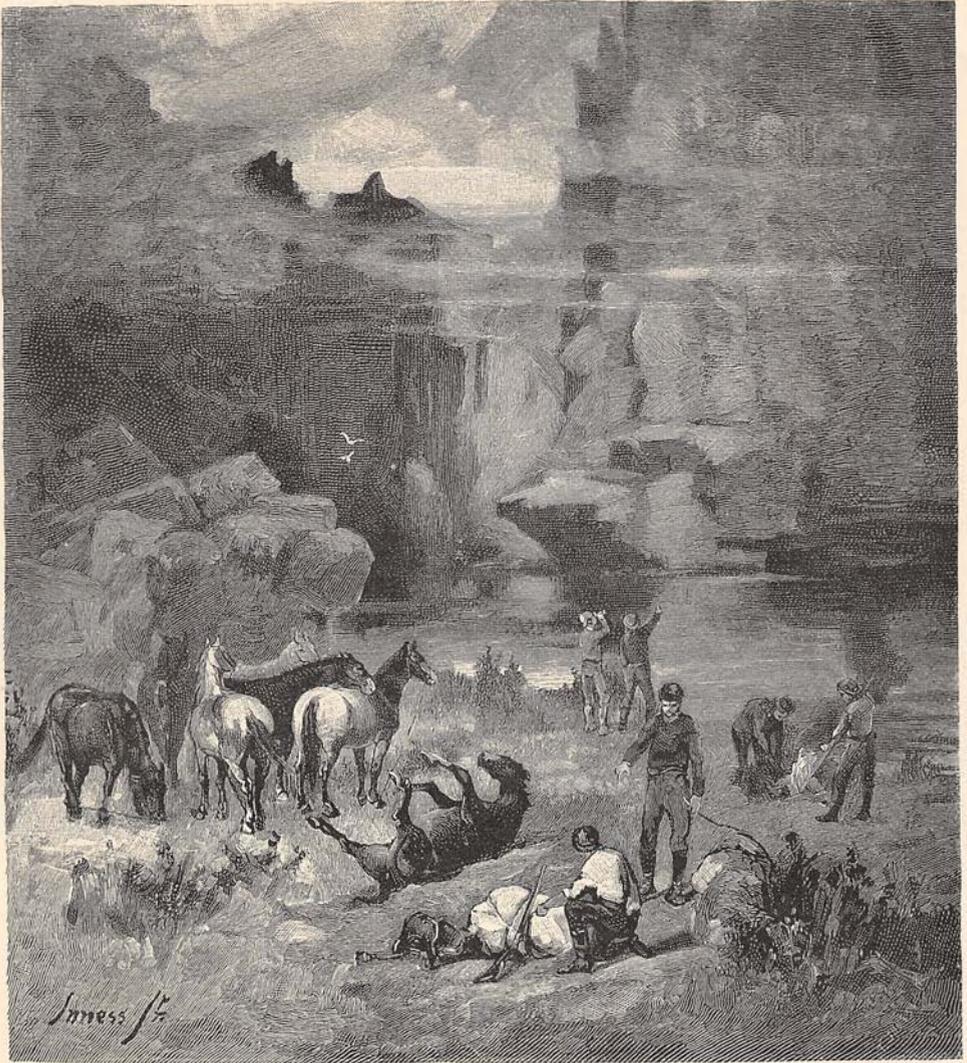


AN OLD RAM ON THE LOOKOUT.

friend of mine, had a girth around the body of seven feet three and a half inches, while the length from the tip of the nose to the root of the tail was five feet ten and a half inches. It was impossible to ascertain his weight, but from the fact that two powerful men could not lift him it must have been between three and four hundred pounds. About twelve or fifteen years ago some enterprising Californians, desiring to try an experimental crossing of the antelope-goat with the Angora goat of Asia, visited Montana and offered large rewards, in some instances as much as eight hundred dollars, for a live adult goat. In the course of a year they succeeded in getting several, but I believe only one reached California alive. Four hardy mountaineers devoted a full year to the task of catching the wary animals, necessarily living all the time, even in winter, in the inhospitable regions above timber-line. They succeeded in doing so by bringing them to bay with trained hounds, on some rocky ledge, and then approaching from above and lassoing the cornered victims, which were busily engaged keeping the dogs off by vicious thrusts of their sharp

I have only had occasion to watch the antelope-goat on rocks. It appears that on ice they develop greater fleetness, and are equally sure-footed. My friend, Mr. S. F. Emmons, of the United States Geological Survey, recently sent me a paper read by him before the American Geographical Society, in which he describes his ascent (I believe the second one ever achieved) of Mount Tacoma (Rainier), the highest peak of the Cascade Range, on Puget Sound; during which ascent the party came across a band of these animals, "who fled with most remarkable rapidity up the ice-slopes, crossing crevices and ascending impossible steeps with the greatest ease," which would prove that they are equally well, if not better, fitted for glacial regions. I have already mentioned that British Columbia, that very beautiful but hitherto singularly isolated corner of America, is the true home of this rare animal. Hunting there differs in many ways from the sport in Montana or Idaho, at least in those parts visited by me, *i. e.*, the beautiful Kootenay country, in which the great Columbia River has its cradle.

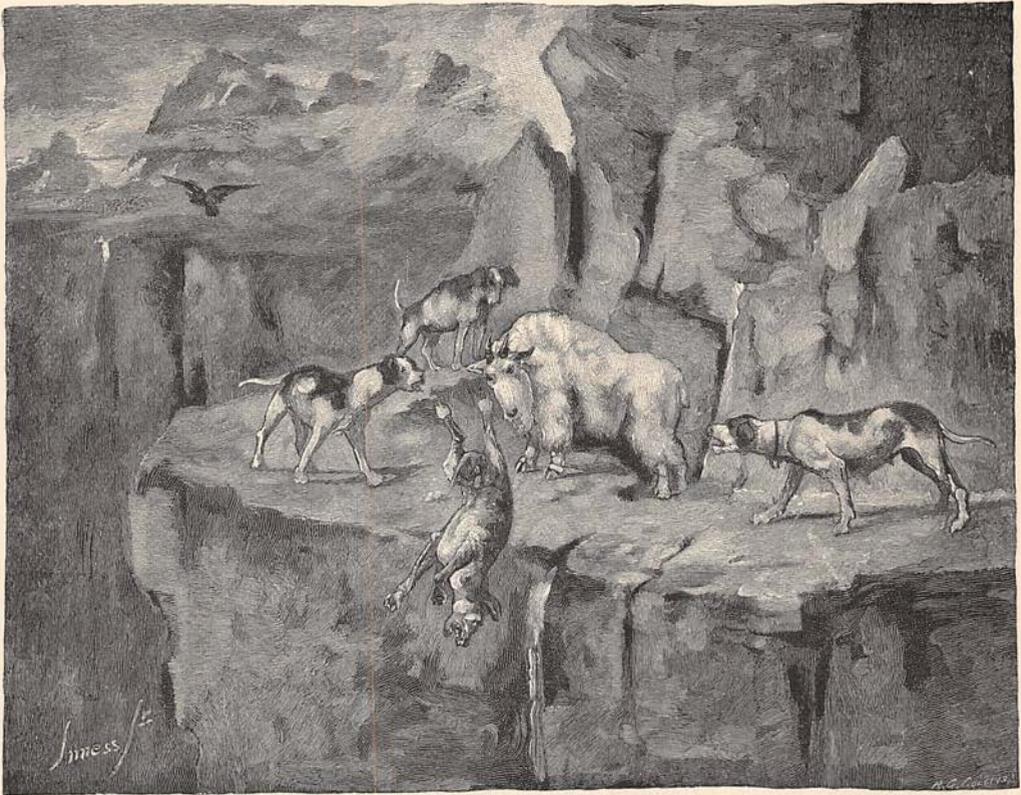
The charming Kootenay River, down



AT THE LAKE.

which I am going to take the reader, knows only the frail birch-bark canoes of the Indian tribe whose homes are along its garden-like banks. These canoes are kittle craft. With your right hand you can lift one that will take four men for a six weeks' cruise. You have to sit very steady, as the merest lifting of your hand will endanger its nicely poised equilibrium; but when once you have mastered the knack, or, better still, can handle a paddle yourself, travel by this medium is wonderfully pleasant. Lying stretched out in the prow of the frail craft, behind us two shaggy-headed Indians, their only garments a small mirror tied round the neck and a breech-clout round the loins, we skim over the surface of the majestic stream, propelled by the skillfully han-

dled paddles of our nude and invisible companions. It is the very essence of graceful and luxurious motion—smooth, noiseless, fast;—the Venetian gondola, refined, transcendentalized. As we silently dart round the sweeping curves we surprise drinking deer, or little families of duck and other water-fowl, and are often right in their midst before they rise to skim over the surface, but little frightened at the intrusion. Great, stately trees overhang the banks, and a motion of our guiding paddle will take us under their sweeping boughs, through which we catch sunny glimpses of pleasing stretches of park-like land, merging a mile or two off into timbered foot-hills, which again are overtopped by snow-crested mountains that are cleft by dark, solemn-looking



BROUGHT TO BAY.

gorges,— a mass of Alpine pine-forests. On approaching curves we involuntarily crane our necks to spy the new scenic beauties the next bend may disclose, but the guttural “ugh” of our boatmen and the swaying of our craft warn us that curiosity now and again gets punished. One hundred and ninety watery miles are between us and our destination: a range more inaccessible than the rest, more elevated than the sea of peaks that surround it, a favorite play-ground of the game we have come to kill. It takes us four days to accomplish the journey by canoe, but how quickly and pleasantly they pass. On a sandy pine-girt beach, in one of the hundreds of bays that can be found on the peerless Kootenay Lake, can be seen our temporary camp, inhabited by two white men and four Indians. One Express rifle, one Sharps’s rifle, four old flint-lock Hudson Bay Company muskets, a few bundles, and some sacks filled with essential provisions, all of which is distributed in six loads, comprise our scant outfit, necessarily of a very limited character; for we have reached “the hindermost attic of creation,” and from here we shall have to carry our worldly possessions on our backs up yonder moun-

tains. As we look at them, letting our eyes range over the seven thousand feet of church-steeple roof of Matterhorn steepness, we suddenly discover that our loads can be yet more lightened; that one cup and one plate will suffice Jack and myself; that my fur sleeping-bag — an invaluable invention when it comes to carrying one’s own bed up mountains, for it is much lighter and warmer than blankets — will possibly also hold Jack’s carcass, notwithstanding that the puzzled London furrier who constructed the said contrivance vowed that none but a human skeleton could ever wriggle in and out of it. The next day, after carefully hiding our canoes, we marched forth on our big climb, where the axe had to replace the alpenstock, and every foot of our ascent had to be forced through the amazingly dense underbrush that clothes these mountains for the first four thousand feet. It took us a long day of fifteen hours’ hard work to do what under ordinary circumstances, without brush to impede our progress, we could have accomplished in three or four hours,—to get up the first four thousand feet over the lake. Camping the first night was uncomfortable; it was like sitting on a steep house-roof, with trees to hold on by, darkness frustrating all

attempts to find a more suitable spot. It had, however, one good side; it enabled us to carry out an experiment which on level ground would never have been possible, *i. e.*, the housing of Jack and myself in the sleeping-bag. It was a chilly, frost-laden night, and the Indians in blanketless misery hugged the fire pretty closely. The next day we reached timber-line, and with it our trail-chopping came to an end. It is monotonous exercise to handle for many hours a day an axe in weight and size a medium between a butcher's cleaver and the Canadian lumberman's heavy tool, or, as facetious Jack not inaptly described it, a hybrid of Washington's hatchet and Gladstone's axe. The toil is much greater if you have a fifty-pound pack on your back, and the slope is so steep that you can only get up it by dint of "sticking your toes into the face of nature clear up to your elbows," as an old Rocky Mountain character once said of my performance on a steep slope. Toward evening we pitched permanent camp at the foot of a very inviting-looking ridge in the lee of a big precipice, with a miniature lake in front of us. A large piece of canvas, skillfully weighted down, made a capital improvised tent, while the Indians were sent down to our old camp on the lake for a couple of loads of lake salmon,\* for experience had taught us that goat-meat was so tough and rank as to be almost uneatable.

Of the hunting or stalking I need not speak, for it was of the same character as in Montana, only the game was far more plentiful, and, never having been hunted before, was more curious and less shy than their brethren in the Bitter Root range.

Let me say here a few words about my dusky companions, members of about the only perfectly wild tribe of Indians that to-day exists on the North American continent. The Kootenays have no reservation; they have no agent, and, receiving no assistance from the Government of British Columbia, subsist entirely upon game, fish, and berries. No census even of their number has ever been taken, and they have come but temporarily in contact with white men, while whisky to a great portion of the Kootenays is as yet unknown. There are two portions of the tribe, the Upper and the Lower Kootenays: the first have their homes in that beautiful bunch-grass country along the Upper Kootenay River, near the

source of the Columbia River, and are "horse" Indians; while the Lower Kootenays live on the rich bottom-lands between Bonner's Ferry and the Kootenay Lake, and are canoe Indians. They are a fine, hardy, and eminently peaceful community. It used to be their pride that no member of their tribe had ever killed a white man. They are all Catholics, made so some thirty or forty years ago by the brave and adventurous French missionaries, who were the first white men, except the Hudson Bay trappers, who penetrated into the vast wilderness on the Pacific, then known as Oregon. They live all the year round in tepees, or tents; and though the cold is nothing like that of the regions east of the Rocky Mountains, yet the thermometer now and again touches zero, while snow remains on the bottom-lands for a month or two at a time. In no country have I seen such pictures of Arcadian existence among aboriginals.

They are a fine manly-looking race, of cheerful disposition and retiring habits. I never saw so much laughter and bright, smiling eyes as when, sitting in a circle round the camp-fire, I would produce my tobacco-pouch and give each of my new-found friends a pinch of its contents. But, alas! also the realm of the Kootenays is doomed. The past year was the last one of the free, untrammelled tribal existence of these lords of a tract of country some twenty thousand square miles in extent. By the time these pages are before the reader this last remnant of the great North American aboriginal race, as it was in the days of Lewis and Clarke, will have passed under the white man's yoke in the shape of confining reserves, while their country, the interesting Kootenay district, unrivaled for its scenic attractions, will be undergoing even more radical changes. Three railroads, two of which are already surveyed and in construction, will cross the Kootenay district: the Canada Pacific, forcing a passage over the tremendous Selkirk range, within sight, as it were, of the snowy peak which is the home of the white mountain goat; the Kootenay and Columbia Railway, a small line to be constructed down the Kootenay Lake outlet by some San Francisco capitalists; while the third is the proposed branch line of the Northern Pacific, which will connect the Kootenay River with their main line. And that is not all: some

\* The existence of land-locked salmon has so often been disputed that it is interesting to note that in the Kootenay Lake these fish can be found in great quantities and of large size. Salmon, as every one knows, ascend the Columbia in millions, but none can get over the falls in the Kootenay Lake outlet,—the only connection between the Columbia and Kootenay Lake,—so that the presence of land-locked salmon in the lake would be puzzling but for the close approach of the Kootenay River to the Upper Columbia Lake, where during high freshets a natural connection between the two waters was formerly established. From an ichthyological point of view Kootenay Lake is, therefore, an exceedingly interesting and, one might say, perfectly unexplored region.



AMONG THE CLOUDS.

English "land-grabbers," friends of the writer, have secured from the British Columbia Government those beautiful stretches of park-like riverine land along the Kootenay, which at present are subject to an annual overflow from spring freshets, with the view of reclaiming them on a large scale and dotting the Kootenay valley with peaceful farm-

houses, where formerly stood isolated Indian lodges.

Poor, simple, smiling Kootenay! Men from the Far East and men from the Far West have taken his happy hunting-grounds under their protectorate; and, ransack his shaggy head as he may, he cannot solve civilization's problem, which says might is right, not right is might.

*William A. Baillie-Grohman.*