

# SPORT IN LADAKH.

F. E. S. A.



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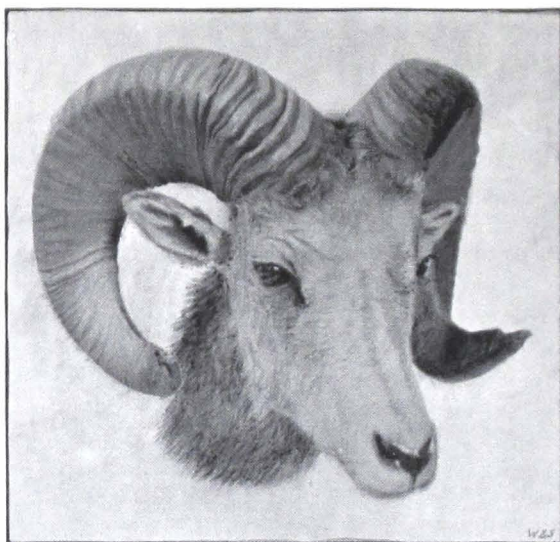
“SKYIN” OR IBEX.  
(Length of Horns  $42\frac{1}{2}$  inches.)

# SPORT IN LADAKH.

*FIVE LETTERS FROM "THE FIELD."*

BY

F. E. S. A.



ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS BY R.S.A.

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## INTRODUCTORY REMARK.



IN publishing these letters, which are reproduced by the courtesy of the *Field* newspaper, and which are a description of a five months' shooting trip in Baltistan and Ladakh, I have added an illustration of a head of each one of the species referred to. These illustrations are from heads set up by Messrs Rowland Ward, and in each case the length of the horns has been noted in the hope that this may prove of some assistance to the novice in judging the size of a head (often no easy matter) when he sees the animal for the first time.

F. E. S. A.

*London*, 1895.





# A Day with the Ibex.



—o—o—o—o—o—

“I WAS too late in the season to make a bag ; they will be scattered all over the tops of the highest mountains by the time that you get there, and be living in inaccessible places ; you will be lucky if you get two or three shots at good ones.”

Such had been the encouraging verdict of my friends at Srinagar when I started off, vowing to get some good ibex heads, or perish in the attempt. It was the end of May ; all the well-known nalahs had long since been occupied, various coolie-loads of horns were coming down to Cashmir, and in some cases the proud possessors of the same, who met me on the road, warned me that the snows were fast melting, and the ibex daily going higher.

However, as I was not pressed for time, and had resolved that if the ibex had gone high I would go high too, and that I would not fail for want of working hard, I had made my way by wearisome marches down the valley of the Indus, and up that of the Shyok, until I had at last reached a long nalah which runs up

from the main valley to the glaciers of the magnificent Mustagh range—the highest known group of mountains in the world ; a wilderness of rocks and ice, including the giant peaks of Masherbrum, 25,678ft. ; Gusherbrum, 26,378ft. ; and K2, 28,265ft.

Here I had met a friend of mine, a military officer, who had been in the nalah for a month, and had made a very good bag of fine heads, and who kindly said that he would make the nalah over to me, as he was going out on the following day. His report, however, was not very reassuring, as he said that for some days he had not fired a shot, and that, the snow having disappeared from the lower mountains, the high feeding grounds had been left uncovered, and the big ibex seemed to have vanished. Fortune, however, was in her kindest mood, and the morning of the 21st June found me bivouacked high up on one of the glaciers that come down from Masherbrum, having obtained two fine heads of over 40in, the first day that I had gone out ; one of them had a single horn of 44in., the skull bearing no trace of another horn, being quite smooth. The shikaris declared that this portended great good fortune, and persisted at the end of a very successful expedition, that the good luck had been entirely owing to the “ek singh wallah” which had been the first ibex that I had killed.

The villagers had told me that this side valley had not been disturbed for eight years, and that there were some large ibex to be found there. The previous evening, while reconnoitring the mountains on the eastern side, our eyes had been gladdened by the sight of eighteen big bucks peacefully feeding at the top of a steep slope or landslip, which came down to the glacier from the higher precipices ; and as it was too late then to go after them, I had sent down to my main camp for a small tent, bedding, and



food, and had encamped about a mile lower down on the edge of the glacier.

It was about 2 a.m. when I was aroused from my somewhat fitful slumbers—disturbed by visions of mighty ibex falling down bottomless abysses, by my faithful Indian servant, who brought me a cup of cocoa and a roll, also a boiled egg; this latter proved to be in a somewhat advanced condition—rather trying at that early hour! Hastily dressing, as there was no time to be lost if I wished to be on the ground before the ibex, I set out with my Kashmiri shikari, Salia Lohn; my tiffin coolie, nicknamed “Bhalu” (the bear), who carried the provisions; and a wild-looking Balti guide, with his long elf-locks straggling down each side of his head.

Our side of the valley was in deep shadow, but the western side, and the glorious pile of Mount Masherbrum, some five miles away, were bathed in the full flood of a brilliant moon, which illuminated the almost unbroken sheet of snow and ice that clothed it from foot to summit in a way that was almost unnatural in its weird beauty. For about a mile our way lay up the edge of the glacier, and we had then to cross a side nalah filled with moraine from the ice above, the boulders of which, some of them anything but steady, gave us some rough tumbles in the dark; however, we safely reached the opposite side, where the slope comes down on which we had seen the ibex feeding the previous evening.

While climbing somewhat laboriously up this slope, we saw a sight that I shall never forget. The rising sun, invisible to us behind the high range, shone on the peak of Masherbrum, making it look as if it were on fire, and suspended high in the

air above the pitchy darkness of the valley, the moon having by this time set, and producing to an extraordinary degree that almost oppressive feeling of solitariness and smallness that most men experience when on a mighty mountain range.

As we ascended the rosy light crept gradually downwards, the day broke, and by about five o'clock we could see pretty clearly all round us. Getting out the glasses we began to look for the ibex; and it was not long before Salia descried them and pointed out to me tiny grey specks in a cleft of the precipice above us, where he said that they were sleeping, to be out of the way of rock avalanches, snow-leopards, and other dangers.

Soon afterwards we saw the females and young bucks get up and stretch themselves, and then come springing down the face of the almost perpendicular precipice; slowly at first, and looking all around them, and then increasing their pace till they were fairly galloping—a pretty sight, as they streamed down on to the slope below, skipping about, the young bucks butting at one another in playful fight. It was a large herd, and there must have been nearly a hundred of them. The wind was still blowing downhill, and we moved a long way beyond the herd, and then worked higher up, losing sight of them behind an intervening ridge. It was bitterly cold as we crouched beneath a rock to rest, and, the wind being steady, I lit my pipe. After some time we made another move up the hill, to be nearer the big bucks when they should put in an appearance, which they did about eight o'clock, and we watched them as they came cautiously, jumping down from rock to rock, looking to right and left as they came, evidently in no hurry. There were ten

of them, all magnificent fellows, and it was a sight to make the pulse of the most *blasé* sportsman beat faster.

As the sun reached the hillside on which we were, the wind changed and blew uphill, but we were now above the main herd, and approaching the bucks on almost the same level. A quick rush, which, at this height, tried one's wind a bit; and after sitting down beneath a rock for a moment to steady myself, I peeped over and saw the big bucks feeding at the foot of the precipice where the snow had melted, about 200 yards away. Salia whispered that we could get nearer, and we crawled on hands and knees to an isolated rock about 140 yards distant from the herd.

"Be careful," whispered Salia, "that dark-coloured one is the biggest; fire at him first." Aiming as carefully as I could, I fired. Down fell the big one, sprawling on the ground; and I gave the second barrel to another big one, and heard the bullet tell. Reloading quickly, I hit another, and missed a fourth. As Salia rushed forward to "hallal" or cut the throat of the big one (unless this is done while the animal is still alive the meat is unlawful for a good Mussulman to eat); to our dismay he jumped up and followed the others round the corner of the rocks. By this time the rest of the herd, frightened by the noise of the shots, came running up from below, and aiming at a big one, I unfortunately hit a small one close behind him, which went crashing down on to the glacier. Seeing another apparently good one, I fired and hit him badly, so that, after going a short way up the cliff, he stopped and stood on a narrow ledge. I am sorry to say that by this time I was so flurried that it took several shots to hit

him again, but at last he lay down on the ledge, and I thought that he was done for, so I sent the Balti up to bring him down. After a somewhat perilous climb he was close upon the ibex, when the latter got up, and came springing down the apparently sheer rock towards us. My tiffin coolie rushed up and seized him by the hind leg; but, with a vigorous kick he sent Bhalu sprawling, and was not finished till Salia caught him by the horns as he was floundering in some deep snow and held him till he was despatched. He was a very heavy buck, and his horns, though not very long, were 11 in. in circumference.

We now followed up the big bucks, and could see two lying far below on the glacier, and, after some dangerous climbing, the Balti discovered two wounded ones, which had taken to an almost inaccessible place, as is their wont when badly hit. There was no chance of getting them without a rope, so we sat down and had breakfast and a smoke, afterwards climbing down to the glacier for the heads of the other two, and so to the main camp, which we reached about 2 p.m., pretty well done. The following day the two wounded ones were brought into camp, so that I had the good fortune to get five good heads, three of them over 40 in., out of the one herd.

The next day I got another of 42 in., and as I only wanted a few good heads, and had obtained eight in three days' shooting at the end of June, I left the nalah; and, though on my way up the Shyok and over the Chorbat I saw ibex on several subsequent occasions, I did not go after them, but marched straight away to Ladak in quest of *Ovis ammon*.







NAPOO OR BURHEL.  
(Length of Horns 24 inches.)

# A Day with the Burhel.



ALTHOUGH my main object in going into the wilds of Ladak was to get good specimens of the nyan—or, to give it the name by which it is more generally, though incorrectly known, the *Ovis ammon*—I was naturally anxious to get heads of the other Thibetan sheep, the burhel and the shāpoo.

The former (*Ovis nahura*) is very generally distributed over the mountains of the district which it inhabits, and one is constantly coming across tracks of flocks comprising from two or three to forty or fifty individuals; but I have found it quite as hard to approach as any of the sheep; in fact, the circumstance that the old males are frequently in company with the rest of the flock all the year round, instead of separating from the females and young rams, as is the case with most wild animals, renders it often very difficult to make a successful stalk. The ewes are excessively wary, and one or two seem always to post themselves as sentinels while the rest of the flock are grazing or lying down.

My shikaris, however, would not let me waste any time in

going exclusively after burhel, though we passed several nalahs which are well known as holding good rams, always meeting me with the answer that "the sahib will be certain to get as many burhel as he wishes, either on the road or on the Ovis ammon ground when he gets there." However, I had, at the time of which I am writing, made many marches, and had shot Ovis ammon, but as yet there was no burhel in the bag; so at last I put my foot down, and declared my intention of hunting burhel, and burhel only, until I should have obtained at least a couple of good heads.

I was certain that the nalah which I was occupying (a well-known ground for nyan, though I only saw small ones there) must hold some good burhel, as the piles of horns that the Ladakis build up by the wayside had, on the road to this nalah, been in some instances entirely composed of the horns of this sheep. Some of these I measured, and found that they must have belong to very fine heads. I fancy that few of the animals are actually killed by the Ladakis—who, as far as I saw, were very deficient in sporting instincts, and would be decidedly averse to taking the trouble which a stalk involves—but that the horns on these piles are those of animals that have either been pulled down by wolves or wild dogs, or that have died from natural causes. You very frequently find heads and horns lying about, especially in and near the watercourses, where they have been washed down from the higher grounds, of animals that have met their end in this way. These are collected by the herdsmen when they go up to the grazing grounds with their flocks, and are built up in piles, being often painted a red colour; and the good Buddhist believes that the former possessors of the horns will



have a good time in a future state, if they are carefully collected and preserved. These heaps are also frequently composed of the horns of domestic animals, such as goats and yaks, and one of the first things you do on reaching new ground is to examine the piles and see if they contain good heads of the animals that you hope to see, as it is almost certain that, if there are good heads of defunct beasts, there is also a chance of good heads of living ones.

On the road to this particular nalah there were more piles of burhel horns than I had seen anywhere else, so that I had great hopes. The nalah itself was typical of Thibet; the hills were high and their summits mostly rounded, though in some places there were rocky cliffs, and it was near these that I expected to get a shot, as burhel seldom stray very far from broken ground, to which they betake themselves when alarmed. The colouring of these hills, apparently quite bare, but having in reality a scanty vegetation of aromatic plants, is very remarkable, looking, as Knight says in his well-known book, "as if some Brobdingnagian child had been making experiments with its first box of paints, and had daubed the mountain side with one colour after the other." Below, by the streams, there was an edging of beautiful green turf, studded with many brilliant flowers, whilst the end of the valley was closed in by a lofty snow-clad range.

On the morning of Aug. 1, I sent a Ladaki, who knew the ground, to examine the range of hills to the south of my camp, and see if he could find any burhel; and, mounting my Tartar pony, started off myself about nine o'clock. A peculiarity of the burhel—or napoo, as he is here called—is that he does not seem to spend the middle of the day sleeping in some secluded spot,

after the manner of most hill game, but you may come across him at any time, alternately lying down and getting up to graze; so that your chances of getting a shot are not limited to morning and evening.

After crossing the stream, our way led up a steep hill on the opposite side of the nalah, which was a stiffish climb for my pony, being mainly composed of loose shale; and at this height, about 14,000ft., a steep slope affects the wind of both horse and man. However, we reached the top about eleven o'clock, and I looked everywhere for the Ladaki, but could not see him. The glare as the sun shines on the rocks and gravel in this thin atmosphere is very trying; and there is always a sort of trembling haze or mirage which makes it extremely difficult to define anything distinctly, whilst the extraordinary clearness and brilliancy causes many mistakes in judging distance until one is accustomed to it.

Eventually we saw the Ladaki creeping cautiously along the rocky crest towards us, and, on our going forward to meet him, he told us that he had discovered a flock of about fifty burhel on the slope below. Dismounting, I crept forward to where a ridge of rock ran vertically down from the crest of the mountain, and could then make out a flock of burhel on the hillside far away down below us. They were much too far for a shot, and the wind was not good, blowing first from one side and then from the other in the most aggravating way, and veering round to all points of the compass, as it frequently does in Ladak, especially on the higher hills. However, there was no likelihood of its becoming steady, so I commenced to stalk downhill behind the rocky ridge, and

after going down about 200ft., peeped over and saw the flock some distance below, but could make out three or four fine rams, one especially, who was lying comfortably on his side with his legs stretched out. I had just decided to creep still lower down when a gust of wind came at our backs, and in an instant the whole flock were in full flight, galloping off towards the higher range. There was not a moment to be lost. I could make out two rams who were the last of the flying herd, and, putting up my sight for 300 yards, so as to be well in front of them, as they were going straight away from and a good deal beneath me, I fired both barrels. One ram fell to the shot, and then got up and went slowly after the rest; while I heard the other bullet tell, and the second ram soon afterwards turned away from the remainder of the flock, a sure sign that he was badly hit. Soon afterwards the flock, though well within sight, were actually invisible, on account of the trembling haze and colour of the stones. This was lucky shooting, but I am by no means an advocate for the firing of long shots at running game ("*Nil desperandum* shots," a friend of mine not inaptly terms them), as the probabilities are that you wound an animal and do not bring him to bag, since you cannot possibly be certain of placing your shot accurately; and this is the most unsatisfactory thing that can happen in big-game shooting. My only excuse was the excitement of getting my first shot at burhel, and my being very anxious to get a head as soon as possible. However, on this occasion it turned out all right, as on following them up we found the second one lying dead a few hundred yards farther on, and eventually bagged the other one, though he

gave us a long climb up to the snow before we got him, he having been hit far back. They were both nice rams, with heads of 23in. and 24in., and very thick and handsome, though nothing out of the way in length.

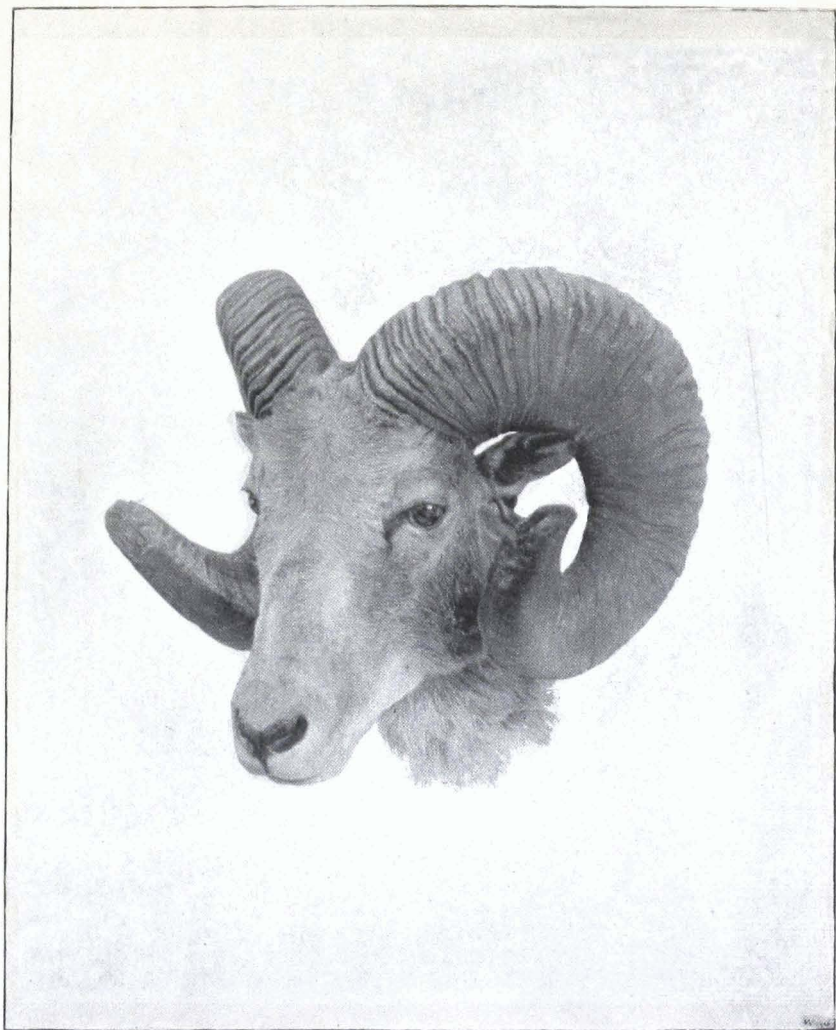
The coolies who were sent for the meat returned in the evening, and there was much feasting in camp, as burhel flesh is very good, equalling the best mutton.

I got another ram two days afterwards, and left the nalah quite satisfied with my sport, as far as the burhel was concerned.









NYAN OR OVIS AMMON.

(Length of Horns 42 inches.)

# A Day with the Ovis Ammon.



THE great prize to be looked forward to in the course of a summer's wanderings in search of sport in Ladak, was, of course, a good Ovis ammon's head, which, as Kinloch says, in his well-known work (I quote from memory), is "So often longed for, and longed for in vain." There is no more magnificent trophy than the massive head of an old ram.

I call him the *Ovis ammon*, because it is the name by which he is most generally known, though I believe that the genuine ammon is an inhabitant of South-Eastern Siberia, and that this sheep should be called *Ovis Hodgsonii*; however, the native name of nyan would, perhaps, be the best one to use.

There are still a good many flocks of nyan to be found in Ladak, but the difficulty seems to be to find the old rams, which, during the summer months, when the sportsman is in search of them, live apart from the remainder of the flock and are curiously local in their habitat; over and over again you see places that you think must hold good rams, the ground being apparently made for them, and you know that they have been shot in the neighbourhood; yet you search unsuccessfully, or perhaps find a flock

consisting of nothing but females and young rams ; in fact, your only chance is to get hold of a Tartar who not only knows their haunts, but is willing to show them to you, as the Ladaki is not a keen sportsman, and is very lazy, and also thinks that, if he shows an Englishman sport, he will be dragged away and forced to act as a shikari, an idea which he loathes.

In this respect I was very lucky, as, through the kindness of our joint commissioner at Leh, and the Wazir of the Kashmiri Government, I was recommended to the care of the Chagzot, a very high Buddhist official, whose word is law amongst the simple Thibetans, and as he happened to be at Hanle at the time that I was there, he gave instructions that an old man who knew the country well should accompany me and show me sport, which he certainly did, as, within three days of leaving Hanle, I returned with two fine nyan heads. This old man, a Tartar of the name of Chering Doorji, was very aged and rather decrepit, but knew every nalah well, and had many stories of the sahibs whom he had accompanied in his younger days.

Before I reached Hanle I had been over a good deal of well-known nyan ground, and had shot two rams in the Gya nalah ; but their heads were not large, and I had registered a vow that I would not fire another shot at any ram that was not a really fine one. Since this I had worked hard, having gone up to nearly 19,000ft. in pursuit of them, and had on four different occasions got to within shooting distance of rams after a laborious stalk, only to refuse to fire and unload my rifle, as there was nothing over about 33in., and my object was to get a few really good heads, and not, as I am afraid is often the case, to say that I had killed (shall we say slaughtered?) so many animals. I must say



that my Kashmiri shikari, Salia, unlike most of his class, was very much against my shooting at anything with an indifferent head. I know no animal of whose horns it is difficult to judge the length through the glass as a nyan; but there is something about a grand old ram, when you do see him, that is different from any other animal that I have ever shot. As an acquaintance of mine said to me, when I met him coming down from Ladak after shooting nyan, "I defy anyone, however much he may have shot, not to feel excitement or 'buck fever,' as it is often called, when he covers a big Ovis ammon with his sights." I had intended to cross to the north side of the Indus, and to go towards the Changchenmo country, as some of my men knew these parts well, but was persuaded by a friend, whom I met on the road, to march with him to Hanle, as he had heard that some good nyan heads had lately been obtained there, and very glad I am that I took his advice.

When you have discovered your big nyan, it by no means follows that you will bring him to bag; in fact, many of the books written by the most experienced sportsmen say that he is the most difficult animal to stalk that they know, his exceptionally keen sense of scent and his habit of always lying down in the middle of a plain, with the different members of the flock watching in different directions, rendering it difficult to approach him. However, my shikari was a wonderfully successful stalker—as, indeed, his record of never once having failed to bring me within shooting distance of my game in a six month's trip (and this means a good deal when the open country of Thibet and its shifting winds are taken into consideration) will show sufficiently well.

But to my story. On the previous day I had left Hanle, and,

marching some ten miles across a gravelly plain at the foot of a high range, had encamped by a stream, where there was plenty of grass for the beasts of burden, water, and fuel. Instead of riding with the Yaks who were carrying my camp, I had skirted the low hills at the foot of the range, and had seen, besides hares innumerable, herds of gazelle and wild asses, also one flock of nyan, which turned out on closer inspection, to contain, as usual, only females and a few small rams. The same evening I had ridden up to some high ground behind the camp, and had seen a good flock of burhel, but it was too late in the evening to pursue them even had I wanted to do so.

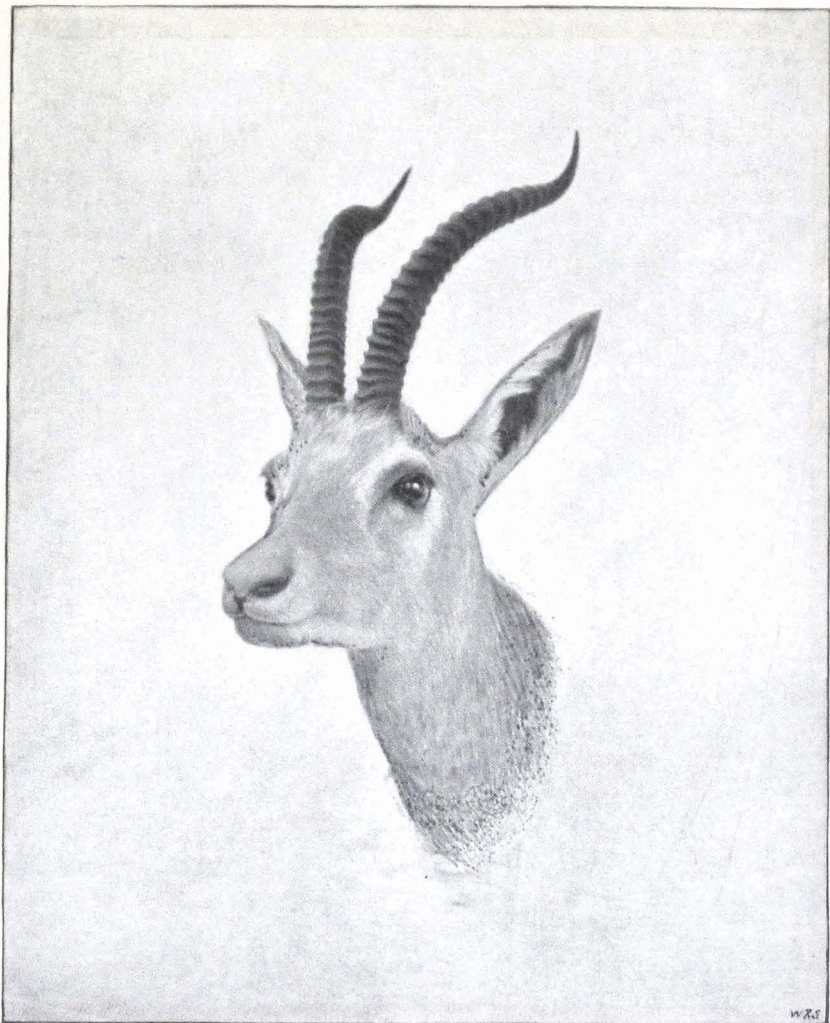
There had been heavy thunderstorms during the night, and on the morning of Aug. 21 the snow had come down to within 1000ft. of my camp. This was favourable for my chances of sport, as it would drive the rams down from the higher and more inaccessible ground. I had, as usual, sent my second shikari, Saibra, in one direction to look for game, and my chota shikari, Ullia, in the other, and after breakfast I mounted my pony and rode off after the latter. After going upwards for some two miles we saw him waving to us to come up to where he was (we heard afterwards that he had seen some good burhel), and I was just preparing to follow him, when a breathless coolie arrived from camp, saying that Saibra had sent in the Tartar who was with him to say that he had seen four fine nyan rams. It did not take me long to decide what to do, and Salia and I started off at a gallop along the hills in the direction in which I had dispatched Saibra. On our way we caught up the Tartar whom Saibra had sent to camp, and he said that the rams were very fine ones. After riding some distance along the hills we at last found Saibra,

who said that the rams had been lying down below him, but had just moved off. Dismounting, we crept along the hill, and at last made them out quite half a mile from, and well below, us. To take off my shooting boots and put on felt-soled chaplis was the work of a minute, and, accompanied by Salia and Saibra, I crawled for some distance to a convenient ravine which led straight downhill and brought us nearer to the flock. Down this we ran at our best speed, and at last peeped over the edge to find that the rams were feeding away from us some 800 yards off. Salia now executed what I thought was a very bold manœuvre. Crouching down we crossed the open maidan for quite 300 yards in full sight of the flock. And then, lying down behind a big stone, we watched the rams through the glasses. We could now see what fine ones they were, they must have all had heads of over 37in., and two of them of over 40in. As we lay there, the wind, always shifty, suddenly blew from behind us, and in a moment up went all their heads! "Now," thought I, "we are done for," but no, after standing motionless for a few minutes, they moved off slowly across a ridge that ran vertically down the hill. We followed them, keeping well above them, as fast as we could (running in a crouching position at an altitude of 16,000ft. is neither easy nor pleasant), and finally gained the ridge. Down this we cautiously proceeded, and at last saw them lying down about 200 yards directly below us, being on the ridge whence they could get a view all round. To get nearer that way was out of the question; Saibra wanted me to fire, but this I refused to do, as there was no certainty of hitting them at that range; Salia said that he thought we might get nearer, so we retreated backwards, lying flat on our faces, up the hill for some distance, and then sideways to the right slope of the ridge; along

this we went, till at last, slowly raising my head, I could see them 120 yards off, and rather below me; the biggest one was lying facing me, and the other two (I could not see the fourth), were gazing down hill. I determined at this range to break a rule of mine, and to fire at the big one while he was still lying down, as I could see his white chest so plainly. To do this I had to kneel in full sight of him for about ten seconds; but he was apparently so surprised that he did not move. I fired, and heard the thud of the bullet, and the others jumping up, gave the second barrel to another one, as they disappeared like lightning over the ridge. Saibra said that the first one was hit—Salia and I thought that they both were; however, a minute afterwards we saw them all racing up the valley below us as if nothing had happened. I was in despair, thinking that the best opportunity that I was ever likely to have had been thrown away, and, while Salia went after the flying flock, I went down to see if there was any blood on the tracks. Not a drop. In no enviable frame of mind I rejoined Saibra above, and he said that one of the rams (he was watching through the telescope) had turned away from the rest of the flock—a sure sign of his being badly hit; and that Salia had shouted back that there was blood on the tracks of the other three. Just then a wolf, that I could see higher up the valley, gave a long-drawn howl, and I knew that he had scented blood. Then I was glad. We followed up the tracks, and found the first ram lying dead, having gone about two miles. The bullet (450 Express) had just missed his heart, and yet he went away as if nothing had happened—a fact which shows

the wonderful vitality of these animals. He had a magnificent head, which measured over 42in., though the tips of both horns had been a good deal broken, as is almost invariably the case with old rams, and his head was a good load for one man to carry back to camp. The other ram went on about eight miles, having been hit rather far behind, and we did not get his head till the next day, by which time the carcase had been entirely devoured by wolves. His horns measured  $37\frac{1}{2}$ in., and were very handsome. The following day I left the ground, as I had obtained what I wanted—to wit, two good nyan heads, and, what was more, had had the singular good fortune to get them right and left.





GOA OR THIBETAN GAZELLE.

(Length of Horns  $12\frac{1}{2}$  inches.)

# A Day with the Goa.



OF all the animals that I hunted in Ladak, I found the Thibetan gazelle or goa (*Gazella picticaudata*) the hardest to bring to bag; perhaps I was unfortunate in the ground on which I found them, as I never came across them except on vast plains where it was most difficult to get near them, for I believe that, given favourable ground, they are by no means difficult to obtain; be that as it may, it cost me a good deal more time and trouble to get my goa than it had done to bag *Ovis ammon*, shapoo, or any of the other animals which inhabit that country.

Whilst marching up to Leh I had met a man on the road who had been shooting in Ladak and was on his way down to Kashmir; he had had some shots at goa but had not bagged one, and described the hunting of them thus: (I quote him because I subsequently found his description to be such a true one.) "At last," he said, as we sat conversing by the wayside in the desert (we had neither of us seen a white man to speak to for more than a month) "At last you see your goa, a lot of little specks in the middle of a huge gravelly plain. They stand



less than two feet high and are the most suspicious animals imaginable; never stopping still for an instant, but continually moving restlessly about. You crawl for some miles" (a slight but pardonable exaggeration, for it frequently does seem to be any distance) "on your hands and knees over the sharp stones, until you are within 200 yards or so, nearer than which you cannot get. You then fire at the darkest coloured ones, which you imagine to be bucks (as you cannot make out their horns at the distance); and you continue pumping lead into them till they are out of sight, with or without success." This sounded encouraging. In his case it was without success, but it must in fairness be said that he had only been after them in a place where every sportsman who goes to that part of Ladak has a shot at them—a place which rejoices in the name of "Putta tuk tuk," where I afterwards found that it was useless to try and circumvent them, though I subsequently found them in remoter parts where it was not so difficult to get a shot. Even here, however, they were very wary; and I see that Capt. Bower, in his description of his adventurous journey across Thibet, noticed that in those untrodden regions the gazelle were very much more wideawake than the antelope or yak.

The goa is a most beautiful little beast, with a fine silky coat of reddish grey, and horns very much like those of the Indian ravine deer or chikara (*Gazella bennetti*), but more slender, and beautifully curved forwards and inwards at the tips. They are to be found in herds of varying numbers on the barren plains and lower rolling hills of south-east Ladak, more especially in the neighbourhood of Tso Moriri, the beautiful salt lake. And you not infrequently come across

small parties of two or three bucks, at a much higher elevation during the summer months; a friend of mine told me that he had seen them when shooting at over 17,000ft. On my way to Ovis ammon ground I had seen goa once or twice and endeavoured to get a shot, but unsuccessfully, and now, having got the other animals, I determined to pursue the goa until I should have obtained one or two fair heads. Accordingly I started in a south-easterly direction from Hanle, and pitched my camp near the crest of a low range of the usual stony and parti-coloured hills overlooking the grassy plain (a most unusual sight in these parts), through which the Hanle river wanders on its way to join the Indus. There was a small spring in this place, barely sufficient to supply the camp, but it was the only water to be found anywhere near; and there were many tracks of gazelle and also of Ovis ammon leading down to it. Immediately above the camp rose a hill with a rounded top, and beyond this was a high plateau which was evidently a very favourite haunt of the kyang or wild ass, as we saw them there the day that we arrived at the camping ground, in hundreds; and also a small herd of goa, but as far as we could make out they were all females.

On the morning of the 25th of August I sent out my second shikari, Saibra, and with him the old Tartar, Chering Doorji, who had been so useful to me in finding Ovis ammon rams, telling them to go up on to the plateau and see if they could see any buck gazelle. It had been a bitterly cold night and had frozen hard; and when it is as cold as this in the middle of August, one cannot help wondering what the climate must be like in the middle of winter. I started

about half past eight with my chota shikari, Ullia, and rode up to the plateau where we had sighted the goa on the previous evening. When we got to the top we saw a few gazelle, but they were all does; and, crossing the plain, we met Saibra and Chering Doorji, who said that they had seen several goa on the slope below the edge of the plateau, but that there were no bucks amongst them. However, I sent Ullia to look, and soon saw him beckoning to me to come to him. Dismounting, I crept cautiously to the edge, and he pointed out five animals directly below us which looked like bucks, but at the distance it was impossible to tell for certain. They must have thought that something was up, for after gazing in our direction for some moments, they moved further off down the slope and then began to feed. I waited for about half an hour, to give them time to recover from their surprise, and smoked a pipe, and then began my stalk. We first moved some little distance along the edge—of course keeping out of sight—and then began to climb downwards. The descent was not difficult; the only thing was (as it always is in this country) to avoid making a noise, as the hillsides consist mainly of loose shale which rattles down on the slightest provocation. It is difficult to know what footgear to use, as the Kashmiri grass shoe gets worn out directly on the sharp stones. One's men, of course, go barefoot; and I found that the most satisfactory things to wear were English shooting-boots, till the actual stalk began, when I changed them for the Kashmiri leather chapli or sandal, soled with felt.

After proceeding down hill till we judged that we must

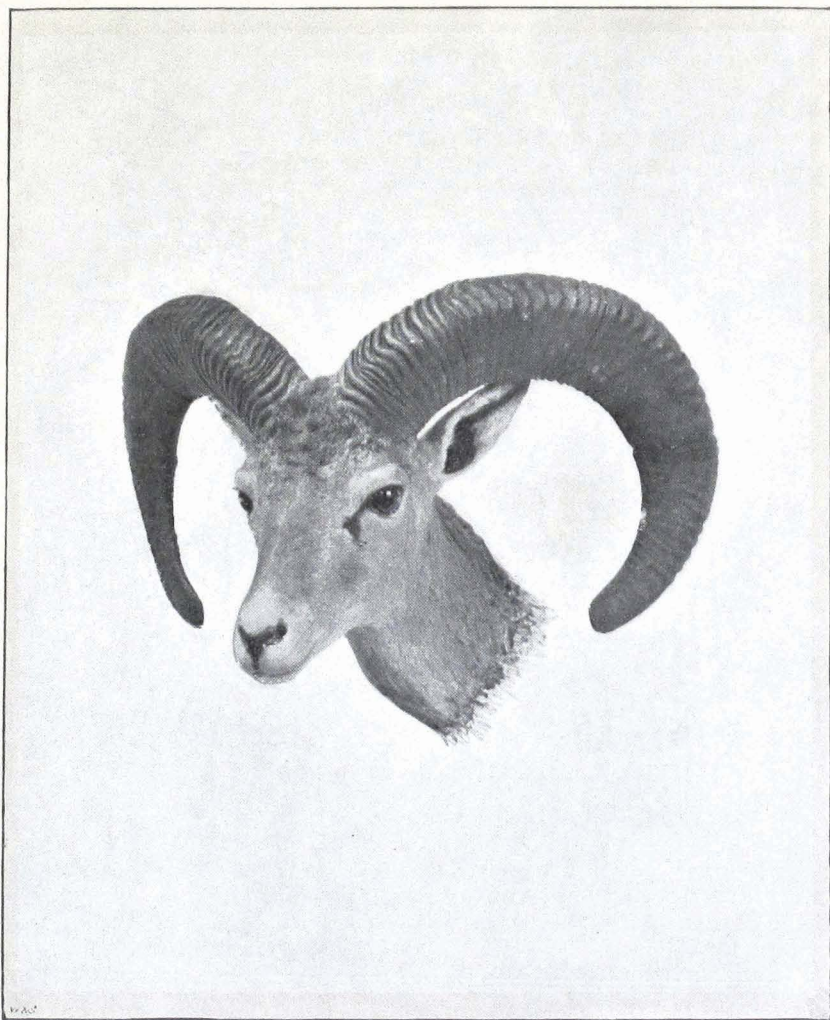
be about on a level with the goa, we began to approach them on hands and knees. There were some slight undulations running down from the crest, and I soon saw that it would be the most favourable chance that I had yet had of getting a gazelle. When we got to within about 100 yards, I cautiously raised my head and saw the horns of a buck which was lying down; at the same moment they all jumped up, and I had just time to drop one with a bullet through the heart before they all made off. He had a nice head of about 12in., but the horns were thin. After dispatching him to camp, I mounted and rode after the remaining four bucks; as goa do not, as a rule, go very far before stopping again. We soon discovered them, about a mile and a half below us, and started off in pursuit. On this occasion I think they must have heard us, as they went off without our seeing them; and when next in sight they were galloping up the hill above the camp. After searching for some time longer, and seeing no more, I started off for camp but on reaching the high ground, saw some gazelle near the top of the hill on my right, apparently all does; however, I decided to stalk them, and set off up the hill. On nearing the ridge, I was watching a lot of does which were scampering away, when a buck came up from the other side, and we met face to face, about 70 yards away from one another. The buck was so surprised that he stood still for an instant, and I had a snap-shot at him; and, very much to my surprise, I hit him in the shoulder. Off he went after the does, but soon turned away from them, and went down to the bottom of the hill, where he lay down in the middle of the open plain. There was nothing for it now but to crawl up to within shot, and, as there was not

a particle of cover, we started from behind him. After a weary stalk, during which I was expecting him every moment to jump up and make off, I fired a long shot at him, but only broke his hind leg; and he actually went some 50 yards with the two legs disabled before he fell down and was ultimately dispatched. His horns were better than those of the one I had killed earlier in the day, being thicker and about  $12\frac{1}{2}$  in. in length, which is a good head, but not out of the way for a gazelle.

Content with my morning's sport, I returned to camp, and set out the following day on my homeward journey.







SHĀPOO OR OORIN.  
(Length of Horns  $27\frac{1}{2}$  inches).



# A Day with the Shapoo.



T last I had got good heads of all the animals which I might expect to meet in that part of Ladak in which I was travelling except the shapoo. Earlier in the season, when I had arrived in my ibex nalah in Baltistan at the end of June, the very first day that I sent men out to look for game, they had reported a large flock of shapoo with five very good rams. I had risen long before the sun, and toiled to the top of a mighty mountain, which took me some hours to ascend, only to see five gaumwallahs, or inhabitants of the neighbouring village, also stalking my rams, which fled precipitately far up the mountain, as did the gaumwallahs when pursued by my irate shikaris, and were no more seen. This was disconcerting, and I had to content myself with admiring the wonderful view of K2, and the other Mustagh peaks, which I got from this point of vantage, and return to my camp empty handed. This was my first day after game with my shikari Salia, and he was anxious to show me what sort of a stalker he was, so he brought me up to within 20 yards of a flock of female shapoo, which did not see us till we threw stones at them ;

of course, I did not fire, but how I wished that they had been the big rams.

Since then I had occasionally seen females, but never rams, and had not devoted any time to looking for them, as my shikaris had always told me that I was quite sure to get some good heads later on; but now, having slain my *Ovis ammon* and other beasts, I was anxious to get a good shapoo head to complete my bag. The shapoo (*Ovis vignei*) seems to be confined to the smaller nalahs that run down to the main valleys of the Indus and the Shyok, and to be somewhat partial in its selection of these side ravines.

A friend of mine, H., whom I had met shooting in Ladak, had obtained a fine head in a small nalah not many marches from Leh, and had advised my going there, as I should pass it on the way, and he had seen several good rams in it; and though it was some months earlier in the season that he had been shooting there, I hoped that they might still be in the valley.

Accordingly, on Sept. 5 I turned off the road and up the nalah, and camped some three miles above the mouth of it. The same evening we made out a flock of seven good rams feeding high up on the top of a conical hill, and, as there would be no chance of getting anywhere near them before nightfall, we settled to leave them until the following morning. The valley in which I had encamped was an unusually desolate one, even for Ladak, there being no grass even near the stream, though I believe that, had I gone some two miles higher up, I should have found a better camping place. The hills on each side of the narrow ravine were composed of tremendously steep slopes of loose shale, dominated by rocky precipices, which even at this early season were thickly powdered with freshly fallen snow. These slopes of shale were

crossed in many places by the fresh tracks of animals, which might be either shapoo or napoo (burhel), of which there were several flocks in the nalah.

Early next morning I sent my second shikari, Saibra, up the hill where we had seen the rams feeding on the previous evening, and with him a man from the village at the mouth of the nalah whom I had taken to show us the ground. After breakfast I started off on my pony, accompanied by Salia, my head shikari, and a Ladaki called Ramzahn, who had been sent with me by the Wazir of Leh. We went down the main valley for about a mile, and then turned up the mountain. Here, I had to dismount, as the slope, unlike those of the higher regions in which I had been shooting, was too steep even for a Tartar pony. It was a somewhat stiff climb up the ridge to where we had seen the rams the night before, and when we got about half way we met the villager, who had been sent back by Saibra to say that the sheep had crossed over to the other side of the mountain. The villager wanted us to go down again, along the main valley, and then up the next side ravine, but I thought that, as the shapoo had gone across the face of the mountain, I would go that way too. It was a nasty climb, the shale being at the steepest slope at which it could possibly stand, and at every step the dislodged stones went rolling down hundreds of feet; however, after a long scramble we reached the opposite side of the face. Here the ridge looked across a very deep side valley, with a most precipitous and very high mountain on the opposite side. Hardly had we reached the ridge when we saw the shapoo crossing the crest of the opposite cliffs towards us; and some minutes later could make out the figure of Saibra, with the help of the glasses, some way behind them. The rams now

began to feed downwards, and had evidently not seen the shikari. What was to be done? To go down my side and up the other, on which the shapoo were feeding, was out of the question, for, besides being a fearful climb, we should have been in full sight of the flock all the time. If I went down to the main valley, crossed the mouth of the side nalah, and then climbed up to where Saibra was, it would have taken me six or seven hours, by which time the shapoo would have, in all probability, moved off elsewhere; so we determined to stay where we were in the hopes that they might cross over to our side, and in the meanwhile told the villager to cross the nalah near the mouth, and out of sight of the shapoo, climb up to Saibra, and tell him, if the opportunity occurred, to show himself, in the hopes that the shapoo might come over towards us. For five or six hours we watched the flock through the glasses, and I had plenty of time to observe them. They never seemed all to lie down at the same time, but divided the duties, some lying down, some grazing, and some taking up a commanding position from which they could watch all round. The latter would in turn lie down, while others would take their place, and so on. At one time two of the rams had a butting match, and, though the distance across the valley must have been the best part of a mile, I could distinctly hear the crash about a second after I had seen them meet. It was weary work and cold waiting, but one of the chief requirements in this kind of shooting is an inexhaustible stock of patience; a hurried stalk often means a shot missed, or, oftener still, no shot at all. Towards five o'clock we saw them all canter leisurely downhill towards the head of the valley. Salia at once set off at his best pace to meet them; such a scramble I never had, and should certainly never have attempted it in cold blood. We went

clambering along the shale slope which stood at a fearful angle, and ended below in precipices. Where the ground was unusually steep, Ramzahn had to dig a stick into the ground under my feet to keep me up, and whenever we stopped we all began sliding downhill, shale and all. After about a mile of this enjoyable work we suddenly saw the shapoo on our side, and coming towards us. They all had good heads, and four were real beauties. We moved hastily on to the shelter of a ridge that ran down the face, and a few seconds afterwards the shapoo came along about 100 yards above us. By this time I was so out of breath that I could scarcely hold my rifle (all this took place at about 16,000ft.), and the slope was so steep that Salia had to hold me up in his arms to fire. Kneeling or lying down was out of the question, so I had to fire as I was, decidedly shooting under difficulties. However, there was no time to think, as the shapoo had seen us, and were already off up the slope. I fired, and the recoil of the second shot sent Salia, self, and rifle rolling down the slope. However, we did not go far, and looked up in time to see the shapoo retiring hastily across the top of the ridge. Eagerly I counted them—one, two, three, four, five, six; a pause, no more came; this looked well, but the seventh might have crossed by a depression out of sight. We went up, but could see no blood, though I thought that I had heard a bullet tell; but in the excitement of the moment it was hard to tell for certain. Ramzahn opined that nothing had been hit. We scrambled down to the bottom of the ravine, and quenched our thirst at the stream, and soon afterwards saw Saibra and the villager coming down the opposite cliffs like ibex. When they arrived, Saibra said that he had

been watching the shapoo through the telescope when I fired, and had seen one, badly hit, turn away from the flock. He had shouted "Lugga hai" (he's hit), but, of course, at that distance, and as at that time I was busily engaged in rolling down the mountain, I had not heard him. The ram had not gone far, and when his head was retrieved it proved to be a nice one of 27½ in., and, as the Badminton book gives the "average of good head" as 26 in., I was satisfied. However, he was by no means the biggest of the flock, and a friend who was in the nalah shortly afterwards got a fine head of 34 in., doubtless out of the same lot.

As we were going homewards in the evening we saw a flock of six ewes on one side of the main valley, and thirty-three ewes and small rams on the other. These latter presently came down to the stream to drink, and I pursued them for a short way, but, as there were only two small rams with them, and by this time I was pretty well beat, I did not go after them further, but returned to camp, and next day resumed my journey to Leh.

H. certainly had not led me astray when he said that he thought there were shapoo in that nalah.



