

A ROCKY MOUNTAIN GOAT-HUNT.

BY G. M. DILLARD.

STARTING from camp in one of those deep cañons of the Rocky Mountain range, through which courses a branch of Clear Water River, our way lay Westward, or down the cañon. On either side rose lofty mountains, mostly bare and precipitous. The natural wildness and grandeur suggested only one kind of game, only one kind of life—the Rocky Mountain goat—and I resolved to embrace the opportunity unexpectedly presented, and to spend a day goat-hunting.

As one of innumerable unselfish acts, Percy agreed to keep an eye on my saddle horse during the day's travel; so, after getting as good an idea as possible of where our next camp would be, I dispensed with all unnecessary equipments, taking only a small field glass, a pocket-knife, a penknife, a match-box, six or eight feet of small rope and my fort-five-seventy Winchester, with twelve or fifteen cartridges. I left camp at nine o'clock in the morning, crossed the stream fifty feet away and commenced climbing the opposite bank and the mountain side.

Up, up, from rock to rock, I climbed through the lead toward the summit, for an hour without change. Then the overhanging brush in the ravine became too dense to penetrate. At one place I came upon the branches of a tall tree that had fallen down the mountain and, reversing the usual order of tree-climbing, climbed from top to bottom, up a steep ascent.

These fallen trees are a relief in rough rocks and bad brush, as, with your boots well spiked, you can walk on them at a considerable incline, up or down, and save much time. Two hours passed and I realized the extent of my undertaking, as the mountain side grew into precipices and the summit seemed but little nearer than when I started. I ask no one to follow me through the next two hours of difficulties.

It was one o'clock when great heaps of apparently inaccessible rock rose a hundred feet above me. Being accustomed to the effects of exercise in rarified atmosphere, I was not discouraged by momentary exhaustion. With the

prong of my rifle-stock catching in every little rough place in the rock above to assist me up, and the soles of my boots clinging to a projecting grain extending diagonally along the side of an immense bowlder of granite, the footing only half as wide as my boot soles, I climbed to the top of the bowlder and the summit of a Rocky Mountain range. Had I stretched forth my hands in opposite directions and let fall a stone from each, the stones might have rolled far down opposite sides of the mountain and have eventually reached widely different sections of country. The labor had been equivalent to walking sixteen miles in four hours in a good country.

The scene was impressive, even to one accustomed to wild mountain scenes—above, the bluest sky; beneath, numberless vague, vapory cañons, apparently bottomless; beyond, where two ranges met, beautiful green parks and groves of fir; and around, a boundless view of mountain summits.

I climbed down cautiously from that pyramid of rock and followed the range westward, in which direction it sloped slightly and became less rocky on the summit. I examined with the glasses all of the rides and gulches below along the furrowed and naked mountain side. It is well known that goats stand on high points over precipices and keep watch below but not above them, a characteristic probably acquired by living so high that they have usually found nothing to fear from above. So you must go to the summit and hunt down. The first goat that I saw had been wallowing in dust and was so far below and so large that, as it heard me and looked up, I took it for a grizzly bear. Some of their motions are exactly those of a bear. I fired, allowing for distance. The animal ran up a ridge on the right and I fired again. It reappeared on the ridge and fell dead to my third shot.

Climbing down, I had gotten within seventy-five yards of where the goat fell when I saw in the cliffs below, on the left, two goats looking intently down the mountain, evidently disturbed by the reports of my rifle, but unable to locate them. Turning, I endeavored to

creep down to a point of rock immediately above them, so as to command the course of their flight in either direction. But before I could reach the place a cloud of dust and falling rocks informed me that the game was in flight. I slid down and dashed out on the point, and looking over saw four goats and two kids descending the mountain at an incredible rate. Selecting a large goat, the one on the left side of the herd, I fired, hitting it a center shot, from where I stood, through the hindquarter—the bullet probably, lodging in its shoulder or neck. I saw the blood rush out of its white coat where it was hit. It turned aside and laid down on the steep ground. I knew that another shot was unnecessary.

The other goats had disappeared behind some cliffs in their descent, but one of them soon came in sight, going over a ridge on my right. Again allowing for distance, I fired five or six shots which seemed to be correct, as I heard no music of glancing bullets and saw no dust from their striking, except once or twice. Had it been a deer or elk I would have known if the game was being hit from the sound of the bullets striking, but the soft hair of the goat deadens the sound. The animal disappeared over the ridge.

Leaving the second goat still lying in sight, I went down and climbed over the ridge after the last one, and after some searching found it lying in the rocks. A shot through the head ended its life, and it commenced rolling. I stepped out on the rock that it rolled from and the big animal had disappeared. There was a rumbling below and a shower of loose earth and small rocks falling, and an occasional glimpse of the goat, as its momentum carried it into the air over some projecting point of rock. When all was quiet, I took the trail and followed down.

With a little practice and proper shoes a hunter can go to most places that a living goat can, but it is more difficult to follow the, fall of a dead one. What I had just seen was an admonition of what he must expect who makes a faulty leap or step in a bad place.

I found the goat lodged in the rocks, a thousand feet below, and discovered that it had been struck four or five times. I estimated that the goats will

carry more lead, in proportion to their sizes, than a grizzly bear. I think this estimate will be supported by the experience of other hunters.

As it was impossible for me to get more than two skins down the mountain, and as I had two goats above, not very far apart, as I supposed, I had to abandon this fine head and skin. I went to the place where the second goat was left, but found no sign of it. The first one I found wedged behind a burnt log near where it fell. Two shots had hit it, one just in front of the shoulder blade, which must have lodged against the neck bone, and the other six inches farther back, probably penetrating the heart. Securing this skin and head, I descended the mountain in a course directly beneath where the second goat was left lying, and found it many hundred feet below, lodged across a log.

It was very difficult to secure the skins because in moving the goat it was liable to begin falling again. After nearly securing the second skin, my pocket-knife dropped from my hand and was gone beyond recovery. Fortunately I had a pen-knife with which to complete the operation.

Lashing the two skins and heads together with the little rope, I continued to descend, rolling the skins ahead and climbing after them. By dark I had in that way got about one-third of the way down the mountain, to where a little bench of comparatively level ground afforded a good resting-place.

Nights on the Rocky Mountains, in September, are not warm; I was without the range of wood to keep a fire, and my clothing was of the lightest kind—but I had two goat skins!

With nothing to eat and only two cartridges left, I planted a rock in the ground for a foot-rest, to keep me from sliding during the night, and felt pretty tired, but well satisfied with the day's sport. It was a good place for grizzly bears, and my bed-clothing was the most attractive kind of bait or them, so I collected a little pile of sticks and dry grass by my side, the blaze from which, on being lighted with a match, would show a grizzly's eyes at short range and afford a sure mark.

Wrapped in the soft hair of the skins, I planted my feet against the rock and was about falling asleep, with nothing to bother me, except thirst from the

day's exertions and the thought that I might be several days in finding camp, when up through the clear, still air came the unmistakable report of a distant rifle shot followed by another, and another, ringing and resounding through the precipices and cañons and lingering in the mountain recesses above and below me, like the calls and answers of some strange animals,

It was the signal to me from camp, which I could not waste my two cartridges to answer—in fact, it was better unanswered, since an answering shot, had it reached their ears in the bottom of the cañon, would have caused them to fear that I wanted assistance.

When the sounds died away, I had located them as coming from between a peak on the range that I was on and one on the opposite side of the great cañon, and a moment of close observation in the clear starlight gave certain characteristics of both peaks which would enable me to identify them next morning.

Thus reassured I again laid down on the cold, still mountain, surrounded by a display of starlight more magnificent than I had ever imagined, and was soon fast asleep, with only some sense of a latent watch for a grizzly which I hoped would come and disturb my rest.

I awoke next morning and rose in time for an early breakfast (which I should have enjoyed), and after identifying the peaks that were to act as my landmarks in finding camp, recommenced the tiresome process of working my way down with the skins.

The effects of neglecting to eat anything since the previous morning, and of the unusual exertions of the day be-

fore, were somewhat weakening, and the strain on the ankles in clinging to the steep mountain and leaping among the rocks was very great; so that after an hour or two, during which I had some disagreeable slides and falls, I could manage the skins no longer. I had got them within half a mile of a place to which a horse could be taken, so I abandoned them and marked the place by surrounding landmarks.

Those shots fired from camp saved me much trouble, as I found the bottom of the cañon timbered with a dense forest of white cedar trees from six to sixteen feet in diameter and about two hundred feet high, very different from the surroundings of the camp that I had left; and I would probably have gone down the cañon for a long distance in the wrong direction. As it was I turned up, and after going less than two miles through the forest, came directly into camp, just where I had located it, and soon enough after the boys had eaten breakfast to come in for my share. During the day I took a horse up and brought down the skins.

Fred, one of our men, told of a disagreeable fix that his companion in a goat hunt on the Montana side of the same mountains got into a few years ago. He fell and slid with a lot of snow, but caught against a small tree. He could not get back, and Fred could not assist him. Below him for some distance there was a slide and then a great chasm. Fred crawled around and succeeded in getting below the man and above the precipice. He then called to him to slide down and he would catch him as he passed. He slid and was caught.

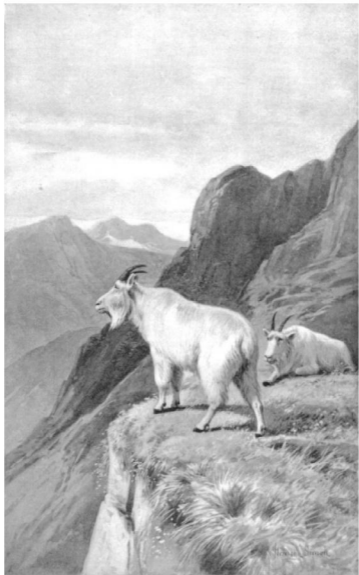
MOON-SET.

THE night wind idles thro' the dreaming
That waking, murmur low. [firs,
As some lost melody returning, stirs
The love of long ago,
And thro' the far, cool distance, zephyr-fanned,
The moon is sinking into shadow land.

The troubled night-bird calling plaintively,
Wanders on restless wing;
The cedars chanting vespers to the sea
Await its answering,
It comes in wash of waves along the strand,
The while the moon slips into shadow land.

O! music of the night, your minstrelsy
Is tender as the tone
Of some dear voice outcalling unto me
Responsive to my own.
Your harp-strings throb beneath an unseen hand,
And sing the moon to sleep in shadow land.

E. Pauline Johnson.



Painted for OUTING by Herman Simon. (See "A See Rocky Mountain Goat-hunt" (p. 41)
IN CLOUD-SWEPT PASTURES.