

some twenty odd years. We will have a day's Musk Deer shooting together, and it will give you some idea of what the animals were then. Very few words will tell you what they are now; and, if not satisfied, there is no law of trespass in the Himalayan forests, and you can shoulder your rifle and come and see for yourself.

"It is the month of November. We have made our way from Mussoorie to the Snowy Range, and, after having had some very decent sport with the burrell and snow-bears near the Gangootree glacier, have come down a couple of marches into the pine and deodar forests to have a few days at the Musk Deer. We have seen a few while in pursuit of the larger, and—to sportsmen—more valued game, and have had a few shots at stray ones while on our way to or from the higher shooting grounds, and have everywhere in and near the forests seen abundant traces of them. A day is now to be devoted entirely to Musk Deer.

"What a fine frosty morning! The sharp air makes one's fingers tingle, and the tip of one's nose feels as if pricked by ten thousand lilliputian pins, while the breath condenses on your moustache like a miniature shower-bath. All seems very still as we saunter slowly on under the grand old deodars. A 'hun-bakree,' or spotted jay, occasionally utters its harsh note, flitting from one tree to another, or a woodpecker taps at some hollow trunk, and a few smaller birds are seen hopping among the bushes or dry leaves on the ground; but there are no signs of any exuberant animal life. The birds of passage are all gone, and there are but few constant here through the severe winters. We are on a not very precipitous hill-side, clothed with a dense forest of deodars, cheer, and rye, intermixed with a few other forest trees, and a slight undergrowth of various bushes, not thick enough materially to interrupt the view for some distance around us. We go along very carefully, with eyes and ears both doing their best, and surely any living thing bigger than a rabbit within a radius of eighty or a hundred yards must be at once perceived. But no,—a loud hiss suddenly brings us to a stand-still, the barrel of the rifle mechanically drops into the left hand, and a quick glance around discovers a Musk Deer standing within sixty paces looking at us, and it must have been watching our approach for some time. It is a wonder, you think, neither yourself nor I, so old a hunter, nor any of our attendants, caught sight of it before; but you must not be surprised at this. In a forest, where there are so many different objects which strike on the vision,—trunks and stumps of trees, standing and prostrate, big moss-covered stones, little clumps of bushes and other things,—it is wonderful how often and for what a length of time a living animal twice the size of a Musk Deer may remain unnoticed, if it only keeps quite still. One day, myself, a shikarrie, and three men, sat down in the forest to have a smoke. The men made a pipe in the ground, as usual, put in the tobacco, struck a light, and we all had a whiff, and then sat debating for some five minutes about what direction we should go. All the time a Musk Deer was standing looking at us within easy shot, and it was not noticed till we got up and were about to start. It is well the foolish animals are so patient, or the one we discovered a dozen lines back would have been half a mile away during this digression. Let us see what we

can do with it. It is face on, offering a very small mark, for a Musk Deer's neck is scarcely thicker than your wrist, and the chest a mere trifle bigger, so you must shoot carefully. You are my guest, and as we are out to-day for your especial edification, you must have all the shooting to yourself. A flash, and a sharp crack; the bullet speeds on its errand, and a handful of grey fur fluffs from the neck of the graceful little animal, but it stirs not. For a moment or two, while the rifle comes down from the shoulder, it remains as motionless as if it were a specimen of the taxidermist's art, set up there for us to waste our shots on—as in English preserves woollen pheasants are for poachers—and not a living, breathing animal, and then, turning half round, it gives another loud hiss, and stamps on the ground with its fore-feet. Our battery is a modest one. Your big, heavy double-barrel bone smasher has been left at home; and as more fitted for this work, or, perhaps, out of compliment to me, who in those days could not boast of a double, you are armed with a small-bore single rifle. A little riled at the miss, but not much, for it was a rather difficult shot,—and you and I know that misses in the field are far more plentiful than in Cooper's novels, or any other tale of the backwoods,—you quickly, though possibly a little quicker than is really necessary, re-load. While you are ramming down the bullet, the Musk Deer makes two or three bounds up the hill, and again gives a loud hiss and stands still; while you are putting on the cap it gives half a dozen more bounds, and again stands like a statue. Now it is half broadside on, and if you will make three steps to the right and rest the rifle against the trunk of that tree, which stands so convenient, you will have a surer aim. Never despise a rest when you can get one. The small leaden messenger again speeds on its invisible way, a few white hairs like the faintest puff of smoke fly off the animal's side; it makes two or three convulsive bounds, and rolls over dead.

"In a long career of forest life, rivalling that of the trappers of the Western World, and hunts innumerable after every animal to be found in the hills, and all kinds of shooting, I will be candid enough to confess, at the risk of being called mercenary, and all that, that I can recollect few more exciting moments in the actual sport than those which elapsed after killing a Musk Deer till the sex was ascertained. Sometimes one that inhabited a particular spot, and was thought to be a male, would escape many times, and what a disappointment it was when it was at last bagged, and turned out to be a female! Some readers of this may require to be told that only the adult males furnish musk, and females were to me utterly worthless. Some one has written somewhere that when sport is once connected with gain or loss it ceases to become such. My experience tells me quite the reverse, and that the value of the quarry enhances the pleasure and excitement in every way. Would grouse or partridge-shooting be what it is if the birds were not so much valued? I could never wholly realize what it really was that made Musk Deer-shooting so very exciting. It was certainly not altogether the rupee side of the question, for bird shooting was more remunerating. Whatever it was, Musk Deer shooting was from the very first my favourite sport; and now, when the price of a musk-pod is of little consequence, I still prefer it to any other.

But we must get on with our day's sport.

"As we proceed we every now and then come across heaps of Musk Deer's droppings, some evidently the accumulation of many years; a single heap containing many bushels, a little at the top quite fresh, most likely of the morning's, and smelling almost like musk itself, and the lower strata crumbling into soil. Possibly we come across a nook or corner, where, at the base of some overhanging rock which shelters a small portion of ground from rain and snow, the heap of droppings is sufficient to fill a cart. What is that dark object in the clump of bushes. Yes! it is a Musk Deer on its form. It is not forty yards off. You move a few paces to try and get a shot clear of the many stems and branches that intervene to obstruct your aim, and ere you manage this the Musk Deer jumps up and runs off without giving you a chance. A charge of shot you think would have killed it. Not the least doubt of that; but if you descend to the smooth-bore, you lose the great charm of Musk Deer shooting,—the satisfaction of making every now and then such splendid shots. On we go again, till one of the orderlies cries 'salib, salib,' in an undertone, and points to the foot of a large pine tree, where sure enough appears the head and ears of a Musk Deer evidently also on its form, and apparently looking quite unconcerned at us. You cannot get to see any portion of its body, and it is a nice shot to hit a Musk Deer in the forehead at eighty yards, and nothing else will do, for if the brain is not touched a shot in the head is of little use; so rest the rifle against that tree, and take a cool, steady pot. You may decide for yourself, reader, whether the shot is to be a bull's eye or not. If not, it will probably be a clear miss, and the little Musk Deer might have let the report and the flash pass unheeded; but as the bullet has struck the trunk of the pine tree so close to its head, it is too much for even a Musk Deer; so up it gets and bounds away, and is out of danger ere you can re-load. You need not hurry,—it is not likely to halt; a Musk Deer on its legs when discovered and disturbed will stand a few moments at every half-dozen bounds, and sometimes, if you miss, let you re-load and fire two or three shots; but one started from its form generally goes out of sight without stopping at all. We are now getting well up the hill into the region of birch and bush rhododendron. Here is a steep ledge of rock running up beyond the limits of forest, and, looking over its edge at different points as we proceed, we shall have good views of a considerable extent of ground in the forest below. An old male moonall, seeing us on the ridge, turns from its occupation of digging for roots and maggots, and, turning its resplendent neck once or twice and uttering a low soft whistle, rises on its brilliant wing, and, soaring a little above the trees a considerable way down the hill, makes a circuit and comes half way up again ere it settles in the forest half a mile away. With the sunshine on its glistening metallic plumage the gorgeous bird flashes by, almost too brilliant an object to harmonize with this sombre autumnal forest. Two or three females, as if half ashamed of their modest brown attire, content themselves with a much shorter flight, and settle in the trees at no great distance. The sight is too common to attract much notice from us, though the flight of an old male moonall, seen ever so frequently, cannot fail to arrest some attention,