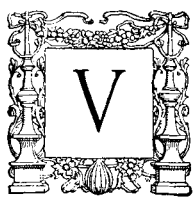


A Rocky Mountain Game Trail

BY WALTER PRICHARD EATON



VARIOUS animals have their individual trails, which they follow with considerable regularity, and some animals have communal highways from point to point. Last winter I found a fox's burrow far up a steep Berkshire hillside, and leading from it a narrow trail trodden about six or eight inches into the deep snow like a tiny ditch, which wound down through the thick laurel to a pasture edge above a farm where many chickens were kept. Since the last snow, at any rate, the fox had made every trip to and from his nest via this trail. In an alder and young pine thicket not a mile away I found a well-packed rabbit highroad with innumerable smaller cross streets. This street system was quite evidently used by at least a score of the animals. Deer have often their individual trails, and so have the otter. In the old days the buffalo followed beaten tracks from one pasturage to another. Even the migrating birds have charted the air. To the person who loves the wilds, and who especially enjoys practising self-forgetfulness in the wilderness, attempting to recreate the forest scene as it must appear to the eye of the unstartled animal, or as it might appear to man's eye could he render himself invisible and odorless, any game trail is a challenge to the imagination; some of us, indeed, find in this challenge sufficient excitement without being driven to up gun and after.

There are few more interesting game trails in the United States to-day than those in the high Rockies, generally far above timber-line and sometimes threading dizzy spines of rock along the Great Divide, remote and almost inaccessible. Naturally, they are coming to be most trodden in our National Parks, where the game is protected now and at least holding its own in numbers. It was my

good fortune recently to find and to follow several such game trails along the knife-blade ridge of "the backbone of the world" in Glacier National Park, at altitudes varying from seventy-five hundred to almost ten thousand feet. Above the timber, above the glaciers, but never above some patch of moss or tiny garden of alpine flowers, with the vast, tumbled world spread out below, the goats and sheep traverse their windy highways. They are the permanent residents of the peaks. Sometimes a deer may come, when the trail is easy of access; a Rocky Mountain white-tailed deer circled curiously around our camp for an hour one evening only five hundred feet below the Divide at Swift Current Pass. No doubt an occasional mountain lion or coyote may prowl along, looking for a chance to fells a juicy kid or lamb. The whistling marmot, first cousin to our Eastern woodchuck, may not infrequently waddle over the path if it is not too lofty; and silver foxes traverse it. But the hoofs of the sheep and goats are the feet which have powdered the rock and scanty soil into a visible trail. It is their highway; and if you follow it far enough you will always see why. It ends at the jumping-off place. Not infrequently it begins there, also. Nothing without wings can follow a mountain sheep or goat when he comes to trail's end.

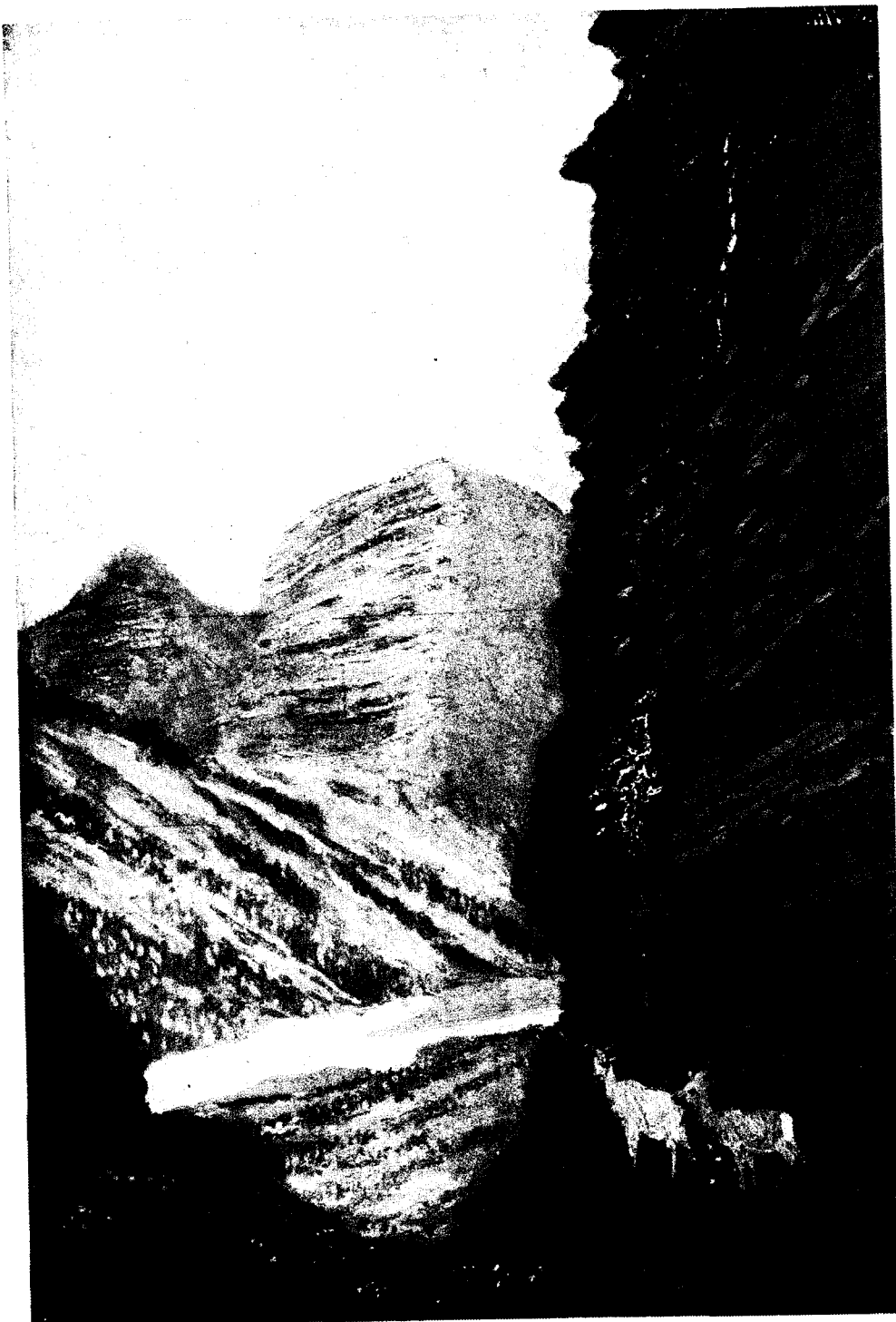
One, at least, of the game trails we visited is comparatively easy of access. It lies along the ridge of the Divide just south of Swift Current Pass. The Pass itself is a depression in the Divide, seven thousand one hundred and seventy-six feet above sea-level. It is reached by an extremely steep but excellent Government trail, and over it come hundreds of tourists in the summer, which possibly accounts for the fact that during the entire July day we spent on this game trail we saw neither goat nor sheep. The big game may seek a less populous

neighborhood while the tourist season is on. The Pass itself is a grassy meadow almost, but not quite, above timber. It affords shelter for considerable groves of stunted fir, from four to eight feet high, and for a vast colony of ground-squirrels (Columbia River ground-squirrel, *Citellus columbianus*). In size and appearance they more nearly resemble a fat gray squirrel than any other rodent familiar in the East, though their fur is spotted rufous and green on the back; but they live in burrows in the ground, like prairie-dogs and gophers. Coming into an open glade in the Pass ahead of the pack-train, I counted twenty-three of these little creatures scurrying about in all directions or sitting up on their haunches and scolding at me, before they had become so mixed up that further counting was impossible. When a ground-squirrel is surprised by your presence he usually sits up on his hind quarters and clasps his forepaws against his whitish belly, as if he had a bad pain. Then he presses himself hard, his mouth opens, and, exactly like one of those mechanical toys you squeeze in the middle, out of his insides comes a shrill, almost birdlike *cheep*. Then, as often as not, he pops down into his hole. If you stand still and wait a moment, you will see his head emerge, either from the hole where he went in or from one not far away (for he seems to dig considerable subway systems), and his pretty, sharp, little squirrel eyes will peer cautiously and eagerly around the scene.

In such a spot as Swift Current Pass, however, where tourist travel is frequent and lunches are eaten almost every day in summer, these small animals become extremely fearless. You may lay a sandwich down beside you only to find it disappearing when you turn around. At one of our two-day camps I secured a photograph of a squirrel sitting up in the middle of a cold soup-kettle, and by the second day several of the little creatures would climb up on our knees and eat scraps from our hands. In such a frequented place the greedy old fellows are so fat they look like miniature woodchucks.

Directly south of the Swift Current Pass meadow rises a pyramid of tumbled rock and shale, about six hundred feet in

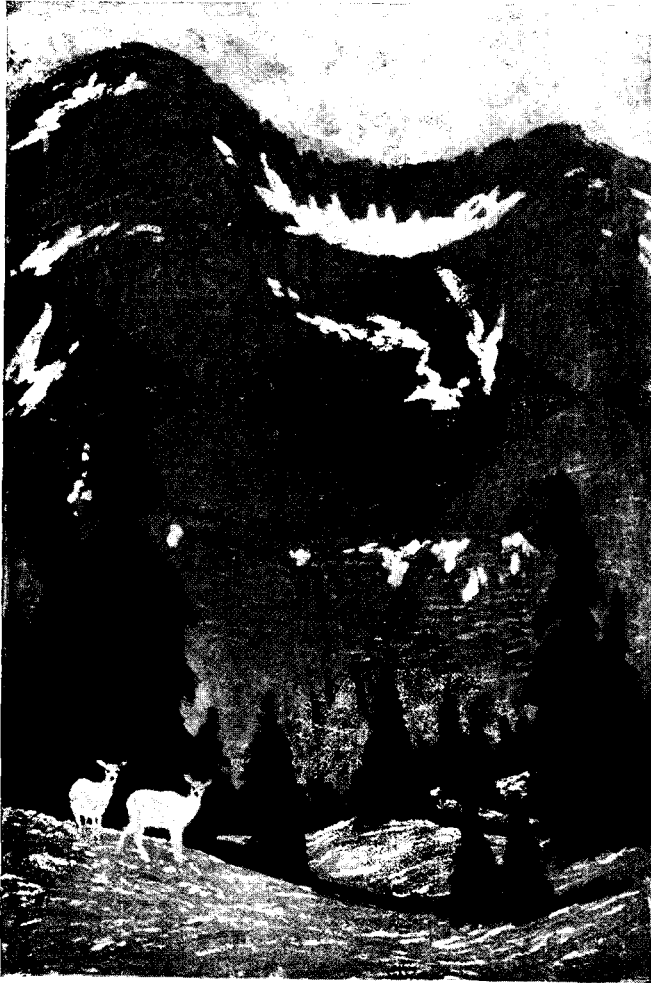
height. Timber ceases abruptly a few feet up its steep slope. You are in the sub-Arctic world characteristic of so many million acres of the upper reaches of our great Rocky Mountain chain. But the end of timber does not mean the end of life. Wherever the least little hollow has caught a soil deposit some wild flower or bunch of grass or bit of moss has taken root. From plants almost microscopic—not over half an inch high—to masses of low heather and gorgeous bouquets of pink moss campion, the gardens range, a surprise awaiting you on the lee side of every boulder, or even on the tops of them. As we climbed this slope we startled a ptarmigan hen and six little chicks, that went scuttling off through the shale behind their mother. The ptarmigan is the largest bird which lives the year through near or above the timber-line. It is somewhat smaller than a ruffed grouse, or partridge, and it changes its color with the seasons like a varying hare. In winter it is white, and consequently inconspicuous on the snow; in summer, a brownish gray, so much like the rocks it runs between that it speedily becomes invisible as it scampers away from you. Protective coloration, too, seems to characterize the marmots of this upland world. To be sure, we saw a pair of them running over a snow-field three thousand feet below at the base of a cliff, as we were starting out for the day, and they were conspicuous enough. But up on the heights the mountain woodchuck crawls out on a rock to sun himself and looks a part of it. Much of the marmot's head, breast, and shoulders is dirty white, but he has a black muzzle and chin and dark eyes. From the shoulders he shades off into earthy brown, varying sometimes toward black. I pursued one of them around a rock with my camera, and finally got two pictures of him, one as he was peeping out at me around the side of the boulder, one as he was lifting up nearly his whole body over the top. Both pictures were taken with a small iris (in that rarefied atmosphere rapid photography of great definition is possible), and made clean, brilliant prints, yet I have to point out to people looking at them which is the rock and which the marmot. After



Drawn by Walter King Stone

A PYRAMID OF TUMBLED ROCK AND SHALE

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WHERE NATURE FAVORS THE HUNTED INSTEAD OF THE HUNTER

chasing this particular fellow with my camera, I resumed the ascent of the slope, and joined the rest of the party on a ledge fifty feet above. Looking back, I saw him curled up on top of the rock once more, apparently asleep in the sun. I tossed down a small stone which struck close to him. He got up, looked directly at me with a comical expression which seemed to say, "For goodness' sake, can't you leave me alone?" turned over, and lay down again! After that I respected his privacy.

The ledge we were now standing upon was almost at the summit of the pyramid. Directly in front of us remained but thirty or forty feet more of climbing,

but it was almost perpendicular. To our left the land suddenly fell away in a great precipice, perhaps a thousand feet in depth. To the right, however, it was easy to work around the summit cone. But, as the cone was climbable, we ascended it by an inclined crevice. From this eminence we could look south-eastward at last along the spine of the Continental Divide, which lay but a short distance below us. The Divide here is scarcely wider than an ordinary room, and both sides fall away with startling abruptness. On the east, the precipices drop only a little way to the upsurging ice and snow waves of Swift Current Glacier, which in turn, on the far end of its shelf, plunges off into space. But the western wall of the Divide is a clean drop of more than a thousand feet. The Di-

vide thus forms a bridge between the summit where we stood and the rising shoulder of Grinnell Mountain nearly two miles away. It is a marvelous setting for an outdoor performance of "*Die Walküre*." All the length of this bridge, straight along the center, ran the game trail, a little path a foot or so wide, as plain as the path a farmer makes between the kitchen door and the well. To reach it from our perch, it was necessary to drop down precipitous rocks for a hundred feet or more. Nothing but a goat or sheep could possibly reach it by circling the east side of the summit, along the wall of the precipice. It could only be reached with any ease

by skirting the summit to the west, and traversing a shale slide in plain view. For the entire length of the trail, of course, there was no shelter whatever. It was a knife-blade against the sky. But, by the same token, an animal upon it commanded a clear vision of all the approaches, and, indeed, of the valleys far below on both sides, not to mention a wilderness of other valleys and snow-clad peaks. Should any enemy be detected approaching, the goats or sheep had only to trot as far as the shoulder of Grinnell Mountain. There, to the left, they could turn out on the broken ledges where they could speedily conceal themselves; or, if they chose, they could keep straight on along the Divide, dropping down a five-hundred-foot precipice to the head wall above Grinnell Glacier, follow a dim game trail along that wall, and scramble up the mansard roof of Gould Mountain, at the farther end. We followed their trail hopefully a long distance, but either they were on other ranges that day or they saw us before we could see them (not at all impossible) and took themselves off. At any rate, no glimpse either of goats or sheep rewarded us. Our reward was a thrilling tramp over a rock bridge spanning two yawning holes, with nothing alive above us except a bald eagle which sailed out from the peak of Gould on silent pinions and with wings motionless as an aeroplane dropped gradually across the cañon to the timber-line. Be-

low us, however, was the wilderness of flowered upland meadows, dazzling snow-fields, writhing glaciers, green lakes, and towering precipices. It is small wonder that the mountain sheep rears the proudest head of any animal alive.

We saw both our first goats and our first sheep at Iceberg Lake. This lake lies at the base of a vast precipice which curls around the green water and the glacier spilling into it, forming almost a semicircle. It is one of the wildest and most impressive cliff walls in Glacier Park, especially as its summit for several miles is broken into castles and battlements which cut superbly against the sky. This cliff has been climbed,



AN INACCESSIBLE WORLD OF PRECIPICES AND EVERLASTING SNOW

and one of the men who accomplished the feat was with our party. Unfortunately, we had just then neither the time nor the equipment to make the attempt again, but he pointed out to me, as nearly as he could remember it, the route he followed up the forbidding wall.

"I watched the goats for a day or two," he said, "and then started up from a point to which I had seen them descend. As I suspected, they had a regular trail up the cliff, though in places you wished almightily that you were a goat yourself, to follow 'em. As nearly as I can recall, the trail came out on the summit about at that depression—"

I was following his finger, which

pointed to a V between two summit battlements, close above several small patches of snow, when suddenly we both saw that these snow patches were in motion.

"Hello!" he cried, "the goats are coming down now!"

They were, indeed; and for an hour or more we watched them, till our necks ached. The Rocky Mountain goat (*Oreamnos montanus*) in reality is not a goat at all, but a distant relative of the antelope. Its nearest kin is said to be the alpine chamois. But it undoubtedly looks like a goat, as much as it looks like anything. It might have been the original of the famous story, "There ain't no

such animal!" Its body is about four feet long, and it stands three feet high at the shoulders. Its long hair is snow white, and it not only wears a beard, but an apron and a full set of pantalets. The mountain goat is said to be stupid and rather slow, but it is wise enough to dwell forever far above timber, amid the glaciers and the precipices, and after you have watched a few goats on a morning's stroll, you are not surprised at the statement of old mountain hunters who say that its chief enemies are the eagles. (Of course the high-power rifle is excepted. That accursed invention is outside of nature, as, in our opinion, are most of the people who use it.)

The flock of goats we were watching were at first almost indistinguishable, so high were they on



THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN GOAT IS A RELATIVE OF THE ALPINE CHAMOIS



THE MOUNTAIN WOODCHUCK CRAWLS OUT ON A HEIGHT TO SUN HIMSELF

the cliff, and resembled merely white flecks of snow in motion. From where we stood—probably half a mile out from the base of the wall, and three thousand feet at least below—there did not appear to be anything whatever for the goats to walk on, but of course there was a ledge, and no doubt verdure upon the ledge, for now and then a goat stopped, evidently to browse. Travers-

ing the ledges in a series of switchbacks, the goats finally descended far enough to give us a clearer view. There were twelve adult animals, but only two kids, which appeared very frisky. One billy was leading the way, and for the most part taking things easy. But once or twice he would reach a spot where agility was called for, and then he would appear to slide over a ledge headfore-

most, landing several times his own length below. The rest would follow, in single-file. Enos R. Mills, a keen observer of Rocky Mountain life, has vividly described in one of his books the descent of a startled goat from a ledge where he had cornered the animal. It went over headforemost, and in its headlong descent kicked against the cliff side with all four hoofs, till it worked itself some distance to the left and landed on a little shelf over twenty feet below, with all four feet bunched, its shoulders almost coming up through its skin with the impact. Naturally, no animal could return by such a route, but the places they will scale sometimes surprise even the old hunters. This particular herd we were watching descended nearly the entire height of the cliff, to a big snow-field which swept up along

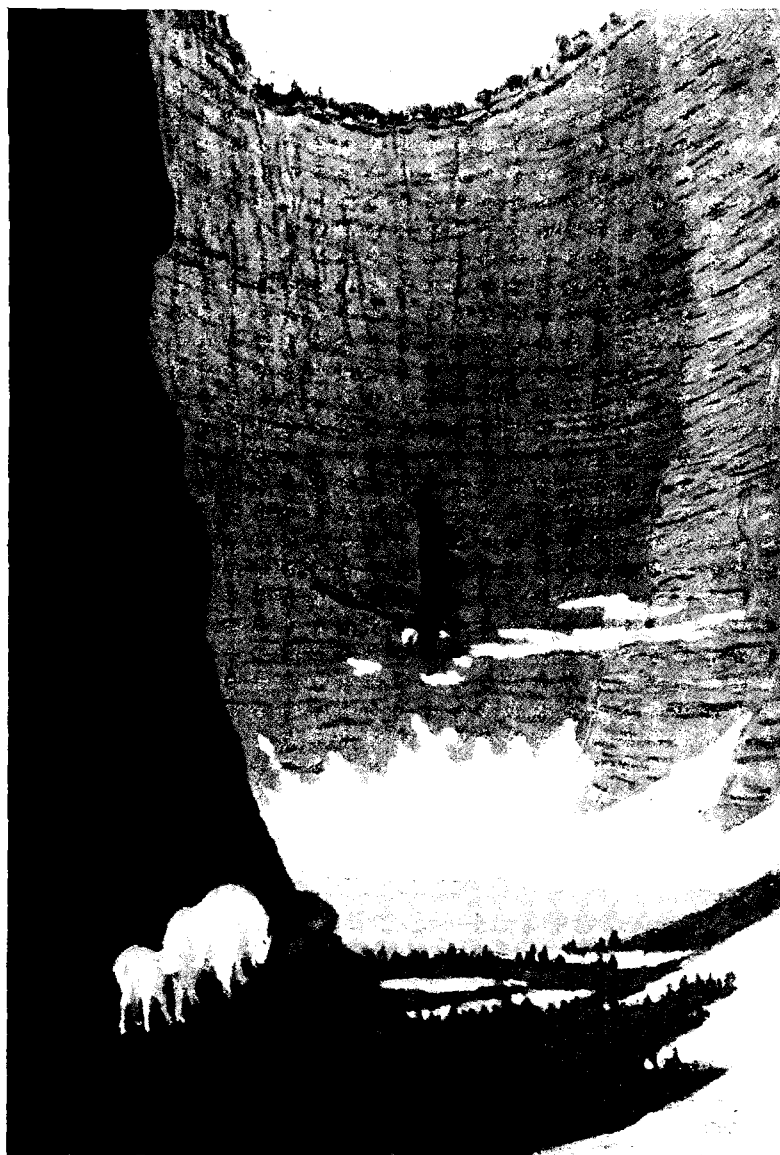
the shale pile at the bottom like a wave dashing against a headland. At this point they all walked out on the snow and remained there several minutes. It was a warm July day, and they were evidently hot and thirsty.

When they were ready to return, the old billy again led the procession, but the two kids were having altogether too good a time; they didn't wish to return. They were gamboling and running races on the snow (which, by the way, was inclined at an angle of at least fifty degrees) like a pair of puppies. An adult goat had to go after them and drive them into line. Then the procession started up the cliff once more. We were curious to see if they followed the same route as on the descent. With the exception of one or two spots, they did. At the points where, on the descent, they

had jumped straight down, they now on the return made a switchback detour to the right or left. Otherwise, so far as we could detect from below, they kept to a perfectly definite path. Human trails up steep places also have frequently just such short cuts for the descent. The flock did not go all the way to the summit. They stopped where we had first seen them, evidently on a shelf a hundred feet (or perhaps more) below the ridge peak. Here they scattered somewhat, and several of them quite disappeared, either behind projections or into caves. It was evidently a familiar feeding-ground of theirs, and perhaps the two kids had been born in that lofty cradle. Comparatively secure against any attack from above, save that of an eagle, they could look out from their dizzy pasture over the entire universe below, and all along the vast semicircle of precipice. It is thus, say



AN EAGLE BEARING OFF A JUICY KID OR LAMB



THE TRAIL ENDS AT THE JUMPING-OFF PLACE

the hunters, that they most frequently come upon the goats—standing on a cliff ledge looking out and downward, rather than up, for signs of danger.

One old-time hunter who camped with us several days had accumulated much evidence against both the bald-head and golden eagles as foes of the sheep and goats. Especially in the spring, he said, when the lambs or kids are young, he

had found their carcasses, killed by eagles, and usually, he affirmed, only the brains devoured. Once he had been a close witness, from a rock cornice overhanging the cliff, of a battle between a mother goat and a bald-head. The mother stood on a narrow shelf with her head down and out, the kid behind her, sometimes under her, while the eagle attacked, with a great flurry of wings,



A MARVELOUS SETTING FOR AN OUTDOOR PERFORMANCE OF *DIE WALKÜRE*

beaten back again and again by the frantic mother's horns, till finally he got one claw into the kid's fur, pulled it from the ledge, got both talons into its back, and flew away. The load was so heavy that the bird could not rise, but by hard flying he could come near enough to maintaining a level to reach what was evidently his nest part way up the opposite wall of the cañon. In the nature of things, few men ever have the opportunity of witnessing such a battle. The combatants are too far aloft, in an inaccessible world of precipices and everlasting snow. I saw many eagles and many goats and sheep through the Park, but never once an eagle with his prey in his talons, to say nothing of the wild battle for its possession.

The same day that we watched the goats descend Castle Rocks above Iceberg Lake, and only an hour or two later, we saw two sheep, a ram and a ewe, at the base of the cliff. They must, of course, have spotted us long before we saw them, but as they are no longer shot at in the Park (except by occasional poaching Indians), they do not entirely fear

man if he keeps his distance. As the frozen lake and a great mixed incline of ice and shale intervened between us and them, they calmly pursued their course, seeking, like the goats, a snowfield, and evidently eating the snow. Then we started across the lake to get a nearer view. We never got it. They didn't go up the cliff. They simply trotted back along the top of the shale heap, leaped lightly upon a narrow ledge of the cliff itself, and disappeared around a three-thousand-foot-high buttress. To follow them was hopeless, for by the time we could have worked around to see beyond this buttress they in all likelihood would be five miles away, perhaps even over the Divide. They move much more rapidly than the goats, and also descend lower. On nearer inspection, we found they had crossed the shale pile by a plainly discernible trail which, when the snow melted more, would probably be seen to lead down from the precipice to the meadow grass on the lake shore. In early April, when the snow is still deep on the heights, they now descend in

flocks of over a hundred to the open grazing around the rangers' cabins. During the last year or two in Glacier Park one of the rangers has secured many photographs of such flocks from a distance of only a few rods, so that the rams are plainly shown, rearing their splendid heads and looking at the camera with the same attitude and expression of intelligence a fine dog assumes when his curiosity is roused.

The *Ovis cervina*, the most common variety of the mountain sheep, is generally called a bighorn by the hunters. It is about six inches longer than the goat, four inches taller, and in every way a handsome beast save in color. The sheep is a grayish brown, though in winter he becomes much lighter. Since he was first discovered by the white man he has been the object of incessant pursuit, as, indeed, he was before the white man came, for, though the Indians cared nothing for the male head as a trophy, they welcomed the excellent meat. The goat has no food value, but the mountain sheep is the best of mutton. When the white man came he, too, was not at all averse to fresh mutton, and he had only to see one old ram put up a startled head with its two splendid horns, fourteen inches in circumference at the base and curving for fifty inches in a complete spiral circle, to realize that here was a trophy worth any effort to secure. Not only must the game be stalked at great altitudes, representing arduous and often extremely dangerous climbing, where every natural feature favors the game rather than the hunter, but the animal must be shot in some place where he will not fall and be mangled. When you consider that a pursued sheep or goat makes for the edge of a precipice, and if possible seeks to escape along its ledges, you can grasp some of the difficulties of the chase, and some of the associations for the hunter clustered in that lordly head which finally adorns his home. Many hunters, of course, were, and are, merely professionals, for a good ram's head brings fifty dollars at the least. The wonder is that so many sheep have survived, not so few. They have survived, of course, by virtue of their rock-climbing prowess, their ability to live on the scant alpine

growths far above timber, and to travel almost like flies on inaccessible ledges. They are a beautiful and heroic breed, so much so that it seems incredible that they can be sheep at all!

We had packed some distance into the northern wilderness of the Park, where as yet tourist travel does not penetrate, before we came upon evidences of the grizzly bears. These evidences were numerous shallow holes in the earth where the bears had been digging for mice and ground-squirrels. The sight set the old hunter in the party off on a series of bear stories around the camp-fire that evening, to the accompaniment of a coyote's bark as the beast prowled through the scrub balsam not far from camp. The grizzly was once, of course, the monarch of the Western ranges. Nothing disputed his title till man came with the rifle. Of man the grizzly now has a most intelligent fear, except in places where he is protected and fed. Fierce and formidable fighter that he is, he doesn't fight man unless he is driven to it, but with the keenness of his tribe (the bear is one of the most intelligent of beasts) he avoids danger so far as possible, and has developed much cleverness at it. The testimony of all Western hunters agrees on the great caution a grizzly uses before crossing an open or approaching a dead horse or cow put out for bait, frequently charging all the bushes around to drive out possible foes in ambush as a preliminary to feeding. That the *Felis cougar*, or mountain lion, is a real foe of the bears our hunter denied. The mountain cat is a coward. Once, he said, he had put out a dead horse for bear bait, and watched from a tree two lions feeding on the carcass. A grizzly (called a silver-tip by the hunters) approached, shouldered in between the lions, and began to feed also. As one fat grizzly can take up considerable room, the lions resented this third party at the feast, and drew off snarling. Then one of them came back and evidently clawed the intruder or bit it. The bear, which had one forepaw employed, swung with the other, caught the lion a tremendous blow, and knocked him fifty feet down the slope. Then Mr. Silver-tip resumed his repast as if nothing had happened. He did not even look around

to see how far the lion fell or what he was going to do when he got up. Evidently the bear felt quite sure of his position. He was justified in this confidence, for the lion rose and with his mate sulked snarling off into the timber. The man who told this story has been a mountain hunter from boyhood, and he is, furthermore, an uncommonly sharp observer whose knowledge has been more than once employed by the Federal Government. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of his tale, which seems to bear out the statements of other hunters that the grizzly is supreme in his own world, even contemptuously so.

It had been easy enough to see a grizzly back at Lake McDonald, where at least one comes every night, together with half a dozen black bears, to feed on the garbage deposited in the deep cedar-forest behind the hotel. But there seemed little prospect of meeting one out in the open, on his natural range. However, early one morning at the head of Mineral Creek Cañon, one of our pack-horses was discovered to be missing, and two of us started after him over Flattop Mountain, suspecting that he had followed the trail northward and presently picking up his tracks. We had gone about a mile through low pine and balsam, growing in upland meadows amid white snow-fields and nodding dog-tooth violet bells, when suddenly the horses began to dance and rear, snorting with fright. Between shouting at my nag, hauling on the bridle, and keeping my never-too-certain seat, I had a tantalizingly brief glimpse of the cinnamon-gray hulk of a grizzly dropping on all-fours from an upright attitude facing us, half hidden behind a low tree, and lumbering off into the scrub at an extraordinarily rapid pace. We were quite unarmed, but he was taking no chances. Neither did our trembling horses wish to take any. We had to beat them on, to the pursuit of our lost animal, which we found cropping grass a few hundred yards up the trail. No doubt it was this horse the bear had scented, and was following to see if it were riderless.

It was at this same camp on Flattop that a porcupine one night ate the entire sleeve from a sweater which one of

our party had carelessly left dangling under his tent-flap. He also consumed part of a halter rope which had slipped from the limb where it was suspended, and he was finally engaged in making way with an ax-handle when the camp cook, an early riser, discovered him, and used what remained of the ax as a weapon of execution. The porcupines are a pest because of their perverted taste. From the articles they eat around a camp, it seems probable that they are seeking salt. They will eat anything which has touched the skin either of men or horses, and so, apparently, become faintly saline from perspiration. At least we could find no other way to account for their odd appetite. Certainly an ax-handle, a halter rope, and a woolen sweater sleeve can hardly be termed nourishing, even by a Harlem goat.

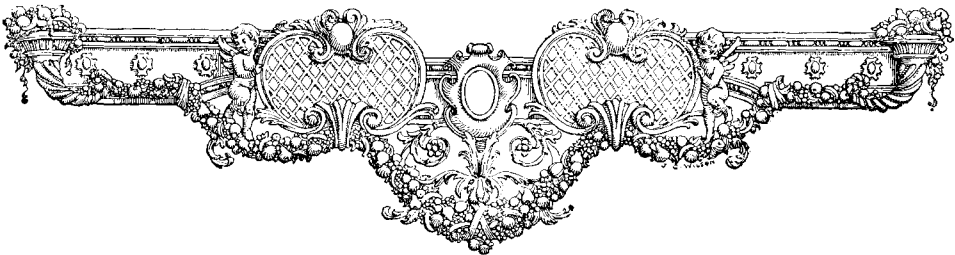
It was from this same camp, too, that we made the ascent of Kipp's Peak, with the aid of a rope, and discovered several faint game trails leading over the upper shale to a well-marked path along the spine of the Divide. Though from below the shale looked quite naked, we found all the way to the summit innumerable tiny and beautiful gardens, little masses of bright bloom and green foliage on which the peak-dwellers feed. On the east side of the Divide at this point is a stupendous hole in the earth, and rising from its farther edge the bare precipices of Mount Merritt. The difficulty here is not to find a precipice, but to avoid it. The Divide to the south is another bridge to Valhalla, and we followed the game trail over it toward the next peak. (Wotan, by the way, would be an excellent name for an old billy-goat.) There was so much snow that it was difficult, with the naked eye, to make out whether a distant white spot was a goat or a small drift. Finally, however, we felt sure certain drifts were moving, so we hurried toward them. At the peak ahead, the Divide swung eastward like a peninsula, and the goats—four of them—were moving around that sky-flung promontory. They did not seem to be going rapidly; perhaps they had not spied us. Presently they disappeared, and when we had rounded the projection which hid them we saw them

not far off, standing on the brink and gazing down into the green meadow at the bottom of the canon. Then they saw us. Without running, but at a rapid walk, almost a trot, they hurried along the trail a short distance and went head-foremost over the rim. When we reached the spot we could see the ledge they had followed down till they had put an overhang between themselves and us. Where they were by that time no one could say. Further pursuit was hopeless. But we had had a capital illustration of how they escape their foes.

The bird life on these lofty game trails is not conspicuous. Above the last timber you see very few birds of any sort, except the eagles aeroplaning through space. Now and then a ptarmigan, a white-crowned sparrow, a junco, a rosy finch, or perhaps a robin enlivens the naked solitude, or a Clark's nutcracker caws. But for the most part the Easterner finds the high places comparatively birdless. Actually, perhaps, there are many birds of many sorts, especially the rosy finches, but the spaces are so great, the birds so tiny, that only when they come close do you notice them. However, as soon as you drop back into timber, especially into the upland meadows or "parks," and out of the summit wind, the familiar bird sounds become audible, mingling with the soft tinkle of the little ice-water brooks. The hermit-thrushes sang for us by Gunsight Lake, and the white-crowned sparrows, too. In the East there are at best but a couple of weeks in May when we can hear this sparrow on his way to Labrador. But in the high Rockies he remains. His song is totally unlike that of his near relative, the white-throat or

"Peabody" bird. He doesn't sing in triplets, and one or two notes are double toned. It is a clear, unhurried, sweet song, with extremely pleasing intervals. But the most conspicuous bird of the high places is Clark's nutcracker (or Clark's crow, as he is sometimes called). In size he is about half-way between a crow and a robin, and in color a striking and extremely handsome blend of black and white. Standing on the edge of a precipice near timber-line, and looking down into the tree-tops below, you will often see a pair of these birds exploding, as it were, into the air, like fragments blown up from the woods below, and swirling toward some fir-tree near your side, their striking plumage outlined against the blue wall of an opposite precipice. We found a nest of young birds, in late July, in the top of an ever-green far up a steep slope toward timber-line. The parents were busily gathering food, and the entire family cawing energetically, so that we were aware of them a long way off.

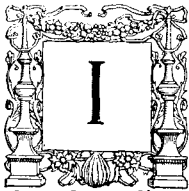
But how different their outlook from that the Eastern crow looks down upon! These birds would learn to fly over a three-thousand-foot hole in the earth. The mountain woodchuck suns himself on a rock amid stupendousness. The goats and sheep dwell where the earth is up-ended, where all nature is longitudinal, where lie the eternal snows. Almost any bird or any wild creature is of interest, a study of his ways fascinating. But on the Rocky Mountain game trails to study his ways is to climb into a new world of primal magnificence, where half the thrill of the hunt is the air in your lungs and the feast of bigness underneath your eyes. There is nothing else quite like it on this continent.



The Real Front

BY CAPTAIN ARTHUR HUNT CHUTE

[CAPTAIN CHUTE, of the First Canadian Division, has participated in some of the most spirited fighting of the war—notably at Ypres during the first gas-attack, at Neuve Chapelle, Loos, St. Eloi, and the Somme. In this last engagement he suffered concussion of the brain and was discharged as medically unfit for further service. Captain Chute had previously had a varied experience as a war correspondent, in the Balkans, with the Turkish and Greek armies, and in Mexico with General Funston. His articles on the present war are among the most brilliant first-hand descriptions that have been written. —THE EDITOR.]



I was at that hour of the night when the darkness was deepest and the sentries were keenest. I had been up in the front line for "Stand to." Never did that front line seem to be wrapped in peace more profound. Naught could be seen but the inky blackness, broken momentarily by the flight of a star-shell which silhouetted a grim line of figures with fixed bayonets waiting on the parapet. Darkness returned, and in the utter gloom I groped my way and shivered, not from the chill night winds, but from those apprehensive, high-tensed nerves that, like a wireless coherer, seemed to catch the far-off waves of something stirring in the night.

In the flash of the star-shell I had seen the glint of the bayonets, and a momentary adumbration of that living wall that stands between our country and the foe. What if that living wall should break? In the vastness of the night it seemed so frail and so all-encompassed.

I climbed up on the parapet, between two sentries; both were peering intently through the gloom.

"All quiet on the front to-night?" I inquired.

"All quiet for the moment, sir," came the answer.

Like one on the shore of a soundless sea, I gazed into the void of No Man's Land. Again those preternatural nerves, taut as a violin string, seemed to catch the premonitions of a coming storm.

"Keep a sharp lookout," I whispered to the sentry. "It may be superstition

on my part, but I feel certain that hell's going to pop to-night."

"I think you're right, sir," said the sentry. "It feels a bit queer to me just now."

For some time I lingered in the fire-trench, but the unbroken calm remained. Glancing at my wrist-watch, I saw that the hour of the dawn was approaching, and I wended my way down the communicating trench into the supports where my dugout was situated.

I was forward observing officer for the artillery, whose duty it was to keep the guns in touch with the front line. My signalers and linemen were all asleep, except the man on duty, who sat under a candle-light with the 'phone strapped to his ears, his fingers on the telegraph-key.

"Any message from the battery?" I inquired.

"No, sir. No word," came the reply.

Outside the soft wind was crooning a slumber-song. I stretched myself and was preparing for the luxury of sleep, when there came a wail like a lost soul through the night. It ended with a shriek and a sickening thud, and with a roar our dugout was shaken as though by an earthquake. We were old-timers, the telephonist and I.

"That's a Minnie!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, sir; and rather close, too," ventured the cold-blooded signaler.

I jumped out into the trench and listened. The air was thick with the voice of Minnie. Now if there was anything I loathed, it was a Minnie's strafe. Minnie is short for Minniewhuffer, which is a hundred-pound trench-mortar, used by the Boches. In a lecture at a school