

THE WINTER CAMP.

THE walls of log are thick and stout;
The rugged hearth is wide and gray;
The roof will keep the thin winds out—
The fire will chase the frosts away,
While we talk comfort merrilee,
And spin brave yarns above the tea.

Lacobie tells of caribou
And long, gray wolves, in Labrador,
And Stanley sings the red canoe;
And Dick expounds his Micmac lore;
While I talk glibly as I can,
With one eye on the frying-pan.

What matters it tho' winds blow chill
And foot the drifts about our door,
When we have fire-light, and good-will,
And bear-skins strewn upon the floor,
And bacon, and a pot of tea
To make the lime go merrilee?

THEODORE ROBERTS.



HUNTING WILD YAK

WITH THE SIPAN THIBETANS.

BY WILLIAM JAMESON REID.

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FOR months past we had been toiling up the menacing current of the Kinsha-Kiang tributary of the Yangtse Kiang into the vast unknown region of eastern Tibet. Although advance was well-nigh impossible, owing to the antipathy of the fierce native tribes and the rude impediments of Nature herself, yet by dint of plodding we had reached Dubana, where we had planned for a short halt, in order to recuperate before pushing into the still wilder regions to the north.

It was a surprise, and a welcome one withal, to discover that the head man of the district, far from viewing us with the jealous and barbarous antipathy we had met with farther back, was mightily tickled at the idea that two "white princes" had condescended to visit his wild country.

Among his own people he was a personage of no small consideration. At the small villages downstream we had been frequently enlightened as to the

We talk of deeds in field and wood,
Of fir-clad hills and miles of spruce—
The alder-swamp's gray solitude—
The trampled shelter of the moose,
And when the bacon is fried brown
We let the conversation down.

Our snowshoes stand against the wall—
They need good rest, for they have gone
Down forest trails, where shy beasts call—
A giant journey since the dawn.
I wonder if they ever tire
And want to lounge about the fire?

dazzling effulgence of this celebrated luminary. His imaginary importance consisted in being the proud possessor of half a dozen guns of ancient construction and several uniforms of red cloth, and in having at a recent date visited chastisement on the head of a renowned brigand chief ruling over the plain to the southward, who had repeatedly made devastating incursions into his territory. He was a hearty, jovial soul, possessed of an inordinate fund of good humor, much given to the exaltation of his own prowess in war and in the hunting field.

On our arrival he was just on the point of setting forth on a yak-hunting expedition, and, seeing that under his protection we might be enabled to make researches in the surrounding country without restraint or menace, we gladly availed ourselves of his invitation that we should accompany him.

We were awakened two hours before daybreak by several greasy and vile-

smelling hands taking hold of our noses and arousing us to wakefulness by shutting off our breath.

On venturing outside our tents it was to find that it was not purely ideal weather for sport, for a raw, penetrating drizzle, combined with almost arctic coldness, made the thickest of clothing ineffective, while low-lying clouds and the wind whistling down from the stern mountains to the north presaged snow. But from the time that I had entered the land of the Thibetans, I had felt the keenest anxiety to participate in a yak-hunt, and as one of the native trackers had come in the night before with the information that there were several large herds in the valley, half a day's march to the south, the occasion was one not to be passed by.

Our party consisted of Kuel-Li and a number of the head men of the village, Burton and myself, and four of our Kiangsi crew, upon whom the spirit of the chase exerted no appreciable fascination, for during the preparation for the start they passed the time in unmistakable sighings and grumblings, until, disgusted beyond all measure of endurance, I quenched their lugubriousness by threatening half-rations for a week to come. Then they condescended to wax more amiable.

Amid the hullabaloo of the entire population of the village, who had gathered to wish us good luck, we mounted our restless little Sifan ponies, and after several hours' riding up a steep incline we passed over the first range of hills and descended into the elongated valley beyond, where the trackers had discovered the traces of several large herds the day before.

Unfortunately the weather, which had been threatening all morning, ceased menacing, and the gray clouds, hanging like a pall over the surrounding country, swept down with frightful fury, the snow descending in stinging, blinding sheets.

We were for turning back and waiting for a more auspicious day, but to our remonstrances Kuel-Li turned a deaf ear, with the solacing information that none of his own party would return to their village without some evidence of their prowess in the chase, for the hunt had already been blessed by the *Lamas* and the deities would be angry. "Besides," he added, "the fall of snow

will make the hunt all the more successful, as we will be sure to find large herds in the sheltered valleys and it will be an easy matter to track them."

This reasoning was more potent than the mere bandying of words, and slowly we groped our way onward over the uneven surface, our ponies scrambling and sliding down the steep inclines.

The sleet cut like a knife, requiring a stop every half-hour to take refuge in the lee of some sheltered spot, and a constant buffeting and rubbing to keep from freezing.

One of the native trackers, as soon as we had reached one of these halting places, climbed to the top of the nearest eminence, stretched himself flat on the ground, and then, by means of a long, hollowed stick of wood, serving as a sort of primitive spy-glass, scanned the country ahead.

We pitched camp, or rather a temporary shelter, shortly before noontime, when from the top of the neighboring hill came the voice of the *temlik* shouting, "*Jalao, tia, sguaga lauisa*" (Yak, lots and lots of them), as he pointed, with the tube with which he had been surveying the long valley, to the west.

The announcement was sufficiently interesting to suspend the building of the snow-shelter; cold, fatigue, hunger and all were forgotten in the excitement of the moment as we rushed helter-skelter to the top of the eminence.

Peering through our long-range field-glasses we could see some black specks upon the side of a snow-clad mountain, about three miles off. For the moment, however, even native curiosity was stifled before the wonders of our glasses. To them a whole nation of yaks was as nothing before this new and more marvelous wonder, which brought objects miles away almost beneath their very noses. There seemed no chance of the wearing down their inquisitive spirits concerning its magic powers until, as a measure of safety, we were compelled to sound the advance.

Leaving the ponies in charge of two of the *temliks*, and unleashing our large mastiffs, we began the stalk over the snow-covered slope ahead. The most profound silence was insisted upon by our chief hunters, and all conversation was conducted in whispers. At the end of two hours, after a long and weary scramble over the uneven surface, we

were able to get within a half a mile of the herd, which as yet had not scented our presence. All was excitement now. The Thibetans threw aside their heavy coats and we followed their example. The dogs, well knowing what was in the wind, grew very impatient, tugging so hard at their traces that it required the united strength of the two *temliks* to keep them in leash.

One of the dogs succeeded in slipping the trace from over his head, and with a wild barking rushed toward the grazing herd before we could prevent his escape. In a moment the yak went clambering down the mountain slope and up the farther end of the valley in furious career.

We were preparing to return to the shelter when Kuel-Li softened the keenness of our chagrin with the welcome information that they would not go far, owing to the storm, but would seek shelter in the valley on the other side of the slope to our left, and started off at a jog-trot which gave evidence that there was plenty of good, hard work before we should again have an opportunity for a shot.

Yak-hunting is a pursuit that calls for a vast amount of endurance on the part of the hunter. A good long-distance runner will be most successful in yak-hunting.

I learned this to my sorrow, for, viewing with disgust the easy pace at which Kuel-Li was traveling, I reproached him for his laziness and urged him on to a faster pace with all the keen ardor of the novice. That tartly administered advice almost ruined me. If I had known that the chase was to be three or four miles long over a rough country, I should certainly have been more circumspect, and have given the Thibetan credit for knowing how to conduct the hunt in the proper way.

Kuel-Li evidently was determined to teach me a lesson, for away he went with the speed of a race-horse, followed by the *temliks*, while Burton and I floundered and stumbled through the deep snow, bruising our ankles and "barking" our legs against the obscured boulders with a shocking disregard to our persons that would have done credit to the early Christian martyrs. Now before us rose another stubborn range, and, cursing Thibetan stupidity, and its immediate exponents in

particular, I was about ready to give in, when, looking ahead, we saw the Thibetans waiting for us to come up, with grim smiles of commiseration lighting up their usually impassive faces, thinking doubtless that they had given us a lesson which we should not soon forget.

We were very much fatigued from the exciting work of the last half-hour, and covered with perspiration, which froze on our outer garments as we halted for a few brief moments before negotiating the stiff climb ahead. To add to our misfortunes the snow was now nearly a foot deep on the ground, light and powdery, covering every obstruction, until one was roused to the knowledge that such obstructions really did exist by being thrown head first to the ground as he-inadvertently tripped over some hidden boulder.

But in an instant every hardship was forgotten in the news that the *temlik* from the heights had located the herd in a sort of semi-circular valley, and that if we proceeded carefully along the lower slope of the range we could work in on them without their having a chance of escaping.

In a moment more we were on the trail again, and the pace being much slower we had no difficulty in keeping up with the Thibetans.

As we reached the slope of the crest we saw that the herd which we had been following previously had joined another fully twice as large, and were in the most advantageous position for a successful stalk. A careful survey with our field-glasses showed that if we proceeded forward in a body there might yet be chance for them to get away again, so we decided to divide the party. I fell in behind Kuel-Li, and, making a wide semi-circular detour, by four o'clock we had climbed over the summit of the sterile peak barring our advance, and were cautiously working down the other side, stopping now and then to use the field-glasses.

In another half hour we had reached the base of the slope, and from our position we could see that the remainder of the party had worked down on the other side and were ready for the assault. Suddenly Kuel-Li, who was leading, stepped back, his eyes shining, and beckoned to me. Approaching, and looking over his shoulder, I saw a troop of ten or twelve yak on a small plateau,

twenty feet below us and not eighty yards away in a straight line. The nearest to us were two sentinel guards, which were already sniffing the air and showing signs of uneasiness. An instant later the sharp crack of my rifle and the heavy roar of the cumbersome musket of Kuel-Li broke the silence, and peering through the smoke we could see that one of the beasts had fallen, while the others, dazed and bewildered, were rushing into the amphitheatric hollow, from which they could not escape.

Matters could not have fitted themselves better for our purpose. Burton's party doubtless were as busily engaged, for a moment after the report of my rifle rang out we could hear the wild barking of the dogs, the shouts of joy of the Thibetans and the rapid crackle of their muskets.

With a shout we closed in on the bellying group of yaks who, finding that there was no method of escape behind, and worried by the clogs, had gathered in a close circle, tossing their horns. In the midst of it all I could not but admire the splendid courage of the Sifans, who, throwing aside their muskets and armed only with their small lances, rushed into the belligerent group.

Kuel-Li and I, meanwhile, turned our attention to a herd of half a dozen at the farther end of the circle, who were making frantic efforts to get away. Loading as we ran, we advanced to within a distance of fifty feet and fired. As we glanced through the smoke we could see that our shots had not been futile, for the largest of the herd, a fierce-looking bull, was hard hit.

As we advanced still nearer, he caught a glimpse of us, and then with head lowered, his wicked little eyes fiercely snapping, he charged toward the spot where we had taken shelter.

At this moment one of the *temliks* came up with two muskets, loaded with an extra heavy charge, which, rushing with the most amazing temerity to within a few feet of the great beast, he emptied into the lumbering mass of flesh. Although mortally wounded, the yak struggled on for fifty feet further, and then dropped.

We counted sixteen wounds in his body, and three in his head, one having fractured his skull, and three having penetrated through the lungs; yet he had managed to live for fully ten min-

utes when, by all logical events, he should have been dead. Knowing with what force a bullet is projected at almost point-blank range, I could not help being amazed at the supernatural strength displayed by the animal in resisting such tremendous wounds.

Leaving the body of the bull to be cut up by the *temliks*, we chased after the two others, whom we eventually came upon in a thick copse of *tamarisk*. They were far less suspicious and aggressive than the bull, for we were enabled to approach within thirty feet of them, and by a couple of well-directed shots cured them both.

The yells from Burton's party, and the almost incessant crackle of their guns gave notice that they were hotly engaged, and we rushed toward their position, to see a wildly confused mass of bellowing yaks and growling dogs, engaged in furious combat. As I pressed forward, I heard a roar and a crash in the bush beside me, and out rushed a bull, covered with foam and flecked with streaks of blood from several wounds. I had just time to throw myself flat on the ground to one side as he thundered past, and hastily scrambling to my feet, to take refuge behind a friendly boulder, when he had turned, and once more was rushing toward me. My hat had fallen to the ground as I fell, and to this the brute first turned his attention. Then he desisted behind the boulder.

My one chance of escape lay in dodging around the boulder until he should be tired out, as my gun had been lost in the fall. Again and again he charged, sometimes coming against the boulder with such force as to fall on his knees, and at other times rushing so rapidly around the obstruction that his horns almost touched me. Nothing but force of will kept me on my feet. Nature was well-nigh exhausted. The infuriated beast seemed to recognize this fact, for his charges grew faster, and I was almost ready to give up, when I heard the yell of one of the *temliks* close beside me. With his long spear he waited until the beast made its next charge, and then made a lunge at its huge body. It was a magnificent display of courage, and I almost forgot my exhaustion as I watched it. My rescuer shouted something, and with an open knife in his hand, strode forward. As the bull lowered his head to charge, the

man seemed to catch him by the horns. There was a cloud of snow, then the bull was on his back, his limbs quivering in death, while the *temlik* gave me a grunt that might have expressed surprise or a thousand other emotions, and rejoined the pursuing party.

It was the expressed intention of the Sifans to follow this herd to the death, and I knew that Burton would remain with them. Therefore, the best thing for me to do was to return to the "ignak," or shelter, while I still had some daylight to assist me. This was no easy task; but, groping my way painfully over the trail, now almost obscured by snow, by eight o'clock I crawled into the welcome shelter.

Two hours later the hunting party returned after an unsuccessful pursuit, for the rest of the herd, aided by the growing darkness, had been able to escape.

We had been able to secure three large bulls and half a dozen cows, which the *temliks* spent the night in cutting up and transferring to the sledges; and early on the following morning we retraced our way over the snow-covered moor toward Dubana.

As we drew near to the village late in the afternoon, we were greeted with a concourse of jubilant and wildly howling natives, who gathered about us with unconcealed glee, patting us on the backs and dancing round with every token of joy at the good cheer in prospect.

The wonders of our "magic glasses" were told from lip to lip, and the Sifans were so profuse in their congratulations and compliments that we suddenly found ourselves raised to the position of public benefactors.

We could not complain of their hospitality, for, with the air of well-bred connoisseurs and epicures to boot, fires were lighted, and a grand feast was soon in progress, while every few moments the flap of our tent would be raised and a greasy hand would be thrust into the opening, holding forth a huge morsel of half-baked flesh. Not to be deficient in courtesy, we gulped down several of these choice tidbits with Christian fortitude, but welcomed that moment when we could roll ourselves in our blankets and sleep the sleep of utter exhaustion, which only one who has endured the pleasures of a Thibetan yak-hunt can know.

A HUNTING SONG.

THE yachtsman sings of the bounding waves
 And a life on the deep blue sea—
 Of a bark that bows to the crested surge,
 And the breath of the ocean free.
 But give me a dog that is keen of scent,
 And a gun that is tried and true,
 An autumn day when the dawn wind stirs,
 And the woods that are steeped in dew,
 There is the sport that is best of all,
 In the light of the forest gray;
 For what can excel the keen delight
 Of hunting at break of day,

Let others sing of the trout that leap
 From the pools in the rippling brook,
 And the thrill of joy as the click-reel hums
 When the "good ones" rise to the hook.
 But sing me the song of the sylvan glades,
 And the echoing rifle call,
 As it rings out clear on the frosty air,
 From brush by the old stone wall.
 Ah, that is the song that I love the best,
 and a song that is sweet away—
 The song that breathes of the autumn woods—
 Of hunting at break of day.

W. TYLER OLCOTT.

