

down into the cleft, which he did, but merely said »yoq» (no) laconically. I approached the edge anxiously and could scarcely believe my eyes: there was no goat to be seen. I could see clearly that Numgan's expression meant: »So you are one of those, whose shots are all hits, even though the game is unharmed», and he pointed out signs that a goat had limped away after one of my shots. While the old man went up to the crest of the mountain to see if the wounded goat had fallen, I looked in my annoyance for a way of descending to the cleft in order to find a solution of the puzzle. I thought that I would obtain a better view of the gorge lower down, where at any rate one of the wounded animals must be lying, and I began to move cautiously along the side of the mountain which was almost perpendicular at that place. Soon I found myself standing with both feet on a small spur of rock, unable to advance any further. I studied the wall of rock carefully, but there was nothing for it but to turn back. This was easier said than done, however, for, having succeeded with incredible difficulty in turning round on the spur, I could not make out which way I had come. I shouted loudly, but got no reply. I must have been there for quite half-an-hour, when I heard a faint shout on the left from the other side of the mountain. I realised that Numgan must have found my ibex and fired two shots in reply. After a long, long time I caught sight of Numgan's bearded countenance round the edge of the rock. He soon reached me and I climbed back in his tracks. During his descent on the other side of the cleft, in a slight hollow, he stumbled on to the goat I had shot, a 23-year-old with my bullet through its heart; the other one lay not far off. It was a pleasant surprise, when Numgan led me up to the two fallen ibexes, and by our joint exertions we cut off the heads, for the ground was far too rough to drag the heavy carcasses home.

I rode past our charming camping place with some regret, as I shall probably not see the place again. Lying among the lush, green grass by the bank of the rushing river and surrounded by glorious mountains, it was the most beautiful camping ground I had seen.

It is wonderful how surely the natives move at a dizzy height along slopes on which there seems to be no foothold. Their soft leather shoes are certainly preferable to our stiff soles, even when they are provided with large spikes. My yigit fastens two horses' hoofs, upside down, next to each other under his feet and in these he runs about without ever slipping, while I move with difficulty with my clamps. On horseback, too, they are very daring. In places, where you have to overcome some nervousness in riding, the natives will set off at a trot or a gallop.

In five hours we reached the spot where the river Aghias flows out of the mountains and to-morrow I bid farewell for ever to this wonderfully beautiful gorge with its luxuriant pasturage, fir woods, grand mountains and excellent hunting grounds. Besides kiyiks and tekäs there are plenty of deer (maral) here, the horns of which are used as medicine and fetch as much as 200 roubles a pair, and a smaller kind of deer, »ilak». The »ullar» (ugar), a kind of capercailzie, is constantly heard muttering up in the mountains, but there is no time to take any notice of him, when you are after game of a higher class. On the slopes of the stony riverbeds you often come across »kekliks», a kind of mountain partridge. Now and then you find the tracks of wolves and we saw one the other day. The wolves are

*May 26th.*

*Camp at*

*Aghias.*