

were numerous, and killed many of those wild sheep. Hence quantities of their horns and bones were found, and these were made into great heaps by the wayside, in order to guide travellers when snow was on the ground.

"The plain is called *Pamier*, and you will ride across it for twelve days together, finding nothing but a desert without habitations or any green thing, so that travellers are obliged to carry with them whatever they have need of. The region is so lofty and cold that you do not see even any birds flying. . . ."

Ever since Captain John Wood confirmed all these details, Marco's narrative has been recognized, in the words of Sir Henry Yule, as one of the great Venetian's "most splendid anticipations of modern exploration". So only a few remarks need be added. The sense of this being 'the highest place in the world' strangely impressed me also. The excellence of the pasture was attested by reports of big flocks of sheep which were annually brought up to the Great Pamir from the Wakhan side. At the time of my passage they were grazing in the side valleys to the north. Marco's 'wild sheep', the *Ovis Poli* justly named after him, still have favourite haunts on the heights above the lake. We met a large herd of them close to the Bash-gumbaz pass, and on small grassy patches lower down came upon numerous horns and bones of others where, driven down by the winter snow on the range, they had fallen victims to wolves. During our halt Afrazgul Khan's rifle promptly secured a fine head in one of the side valleys above the lake to serve me as a souvenir (Fig. 136). The neighbourhood is known to hunters for bears and panthers.

My day's stay by Lake Victoria did not pass without a