

DRAWN BY J. SMIT.

THE CHETAH.

ENGRAVED BY S. DAVIS.

## HUNTING WITH THE CHETAH.



THE employment of chetahs for hunting purposes is gradually dying out through all the East, this fact being especially apparent in India, which for many centuries past has been the true home of this form of sport. Not very long ago, quite within the memory of many hale and hearty Anglo-Indians, nearly every native ruler or wealthy landowner possessed, and habitually used, these hunting leopards. At the present day, however, the number of men who own them can be counted almost on the fingers of one hand. The intercourse between the two races inhabiting India is increasing, and assuming a more intimate or friendly character; hence English ideas regarding sport, as contrasted with purely Oriental ones, are being gradually adopted. Also, through some inexplicable cause, the mortality among the hunting chetahs has shown a marked tendency to increase, while at the same time greater difficulty is being felt, year by year, in procuring animals suitable for training. They are not bred in captivity, but have to be caught while young, and these leopards are to some extent sharing the fate now meted out by nearly every country of the world to its wild fauna. These facts, in conjunction with others operating in a minor degree, are gradually relegating the training of chetahs, and their employment in antelope-hunting, to the list of "the things that were."

At a few Indian courts, however, chetahs can still be seen, but in some places it is evident that their chief purpose is fulfilled by their being made ornamental rather than use-

ful. They lie about in the sun on the steps of the palaces guarded by their attendants, or are occasionally to be seen taken out for exercise by being led blindfolded through the crowds that perpetually throng the native bazaars. This kind of life, so totally different from that natural to them, cannot be conducive to longevity, and the excuse frequently given for their non-employment, that they are not well, has no doubt more truth in it than is generally to be found in the majority of similar native statements.

A man may live in India for many years and not get a chance of seeing a hunt with a chetah, and visitors whose experience of the country is confined to a few weeks' stay in the cold season can hardly expect to do so. It is, however, a form of sport so peculiarly Oriental and full of local color, so suggestive of past ages, and so illustrative in this respect of the conservatism of Eastern countries,—for the method of procedure has undergone but little change from that practised in the earliest periods,—that it is worth encountering some trouble in order to witness it. At the worst, it is a unique experience, not to be had nowadays elsewhere. Moreover, if a man has any partiality for animals, if he loves to study their peculiarities, to watch their individual characteristics, and to see exhibitions of their powers, then the sport has attractions beyond its historical interest, or even beyond the excitement attending the actual chase and killing.

Knowing this to be so, I gladly availed myself of a chance that came in my way to take part in a form of diversion peculiar to the East, and dating back for nearly a thousand years antecedent to the Christian era, and one that affords



an exciting spectacle of feline prowess which must always be a sight worthy of observation and study.

In our early morning drives outside the gates of Jeypore, during a late short residence in Rajputana, my wife and I had on several occasions taken a road that led past a spot where there was a large tree with heavy over-hanging branches. Under its shade, on a low platform, a handsome young chetah was always sitting or sleeping. By his side sat a man who fanned the flies away when they became troublesome, and whose sole occupation was to minister to the wants of the much-pampered animal. A short distance from the tree was the attendant's hut, and near by a rough flat-topped cart without sides, which was evidently the conveyance on which the animal was carried when being taken to the hunt. Upon inquiry we learned that this chetah belonged to the Maharajah of Jeypore, one of the most powerful reigning princes of India, and was the only one then living of several he had possessed. Subsequently, upon expressing a wish to see a chetah-hunt, the maharajah kindly placed all the facilities for so doing at our disposal.

Before narrating an account of what took place thereat, a few words respecting the natural history of the chetah may not be considered out of place, more especially as an animal of this species is not often seen in America, and very rarely even in Europe.

The chetah (meaning spotted), commonly known as the hunting leopard (*Felis jubata*), is no doubt correctly classified among the *Felidae*, which includes nearly all the more powerful and ferocious predatory animals. In some respects it differs, however, in outward appearance and in character from all the other varieties of this genus. Being such an aberrant member, certain naturalists regard it as a distinct species, and others as a link connecting the feline and the canine families. Nevertheless, it is a cat, and an exceptionally handsome one, besides being in many respects typical of its race. It stands very high on the legs, which are slender, a formation that enables it to capture its prey by speed rather than by bounds, in this peculiarity exhibiting one of the features in which it differs from lions, tigers, and other cats. The claws are only partly retractile, being always visible. They become, therefore, somewhat blunted, and this alone would render them unsuitable for the purely feline method of attack. The head is small and round, but the jaws show great muscular power; the neck, which is long for a cat, is sinewy; and the body is slender, and small in the loins, reminding one of a greyhound. Its general color is a fulvescent cream, or bright nankin, the coat being covered with numerous

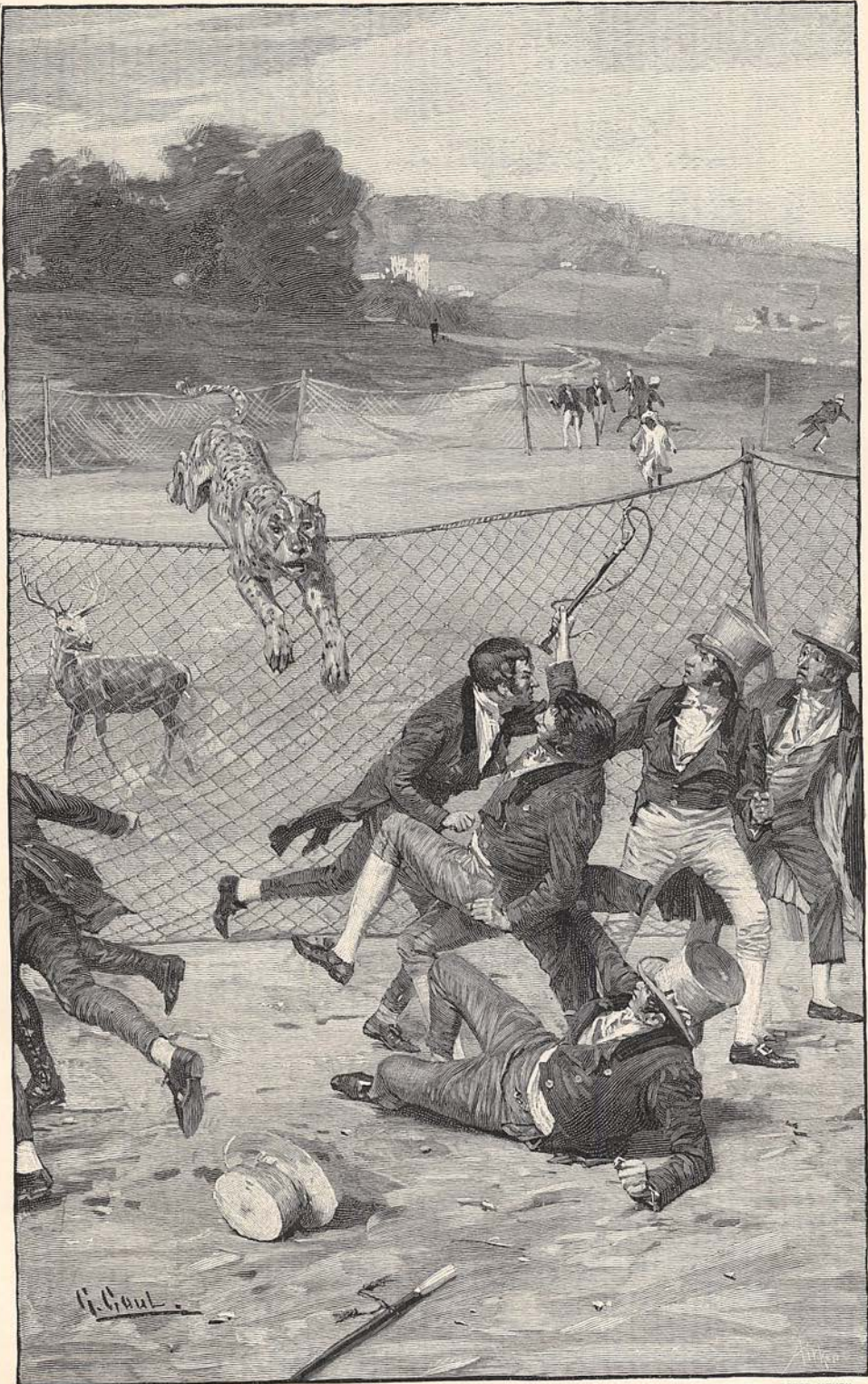
round black spots. A noticeable peculiarity is a black streak down the face, which starts off obliquely from the corner of each eye. The tail does not taper after the manner of an ordinary cat's terminal appendage, but gradually thickens toward the end. It is also exceptionally long, and, besides being spotted in the same way as the body, has three or four black rings at the tip; its absolute extremity is, however, always white. The chetah's fur lacks the sleekness generally admired in the other members of the family, for it is peculiarly crisp and coarse. The neck and shoulders are surmounted by long, stiff upright hairs that form a regular mane.

A chetah stands much higher than the common leopard of India, and specimens are frequently to be seen that measure very close upon three feet. The length of body is also noticeable, for, including the tail, seven feet would not be a very unusual length. In an animal of this size, the tail would be about two and a half feet long. The habitat of the chetah is an extensive one, for it is to be found in Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and in many parts of India; it is also an inhabitant of South Africa. It is only in Asia at the present day that it is caught and trained, but undoubtedly, in a past age, it was so used by the black races of the Upper Nile.

Sir William Jones states that the breeding of dogs and leopards for hunting purposes was introduced by Hushing, king of Persia, 865 B. C. The fashion subsequently spread all over the East, where it has continued to be a very popular form of sport. But the Persians did not invent this method of hunting, for on the Assyrian bas-reliefs a chetah is represented seizing an antelope, and on the walls in the tomb of Sheik Abd-el-Gurnah on the Nile, which dates about 1700 years before Christ, a chetah is portrayed. It is being led by a slip, and has a very ornamental collar. An Ethiopian, who has a large log of ebony upon his shoulders, is leading the animal, these two presents being tribute for the king of Thebes from some black tribes inhabiting the upper country. This scene is colored, but when I saw it three years ago, the Arabs had destroyed some portion of it with the tallow and smoke of the candles they light for its inspection.

Chetahs used at one time to be carried on horseback, sitting on a pillion behind the rider; at another period they were carried in cages on the backs of elephants. The sport they afford has not always been confined to Eastern countries, for in Europe Frederick II., king of Sicily, in the early part of the thirteenth century, introduced hunting with chetahs on his return from a journey he made to Jerusalem. And as late as the beginning of the eighteenth century the sport was revived in France, where at one time it had considerable popularity. In Eng-





DRAWN BY GILBERT GAUL.

ENGRAVED BY PETER AITKEN.

A CHETAH-HUNT IN WINDSOR PARK.





DRAWN BY GILBERT GAUL.

ON THE WAY TO THE HUNT.

ENGRAVED BY E. H. DEL'ORME.

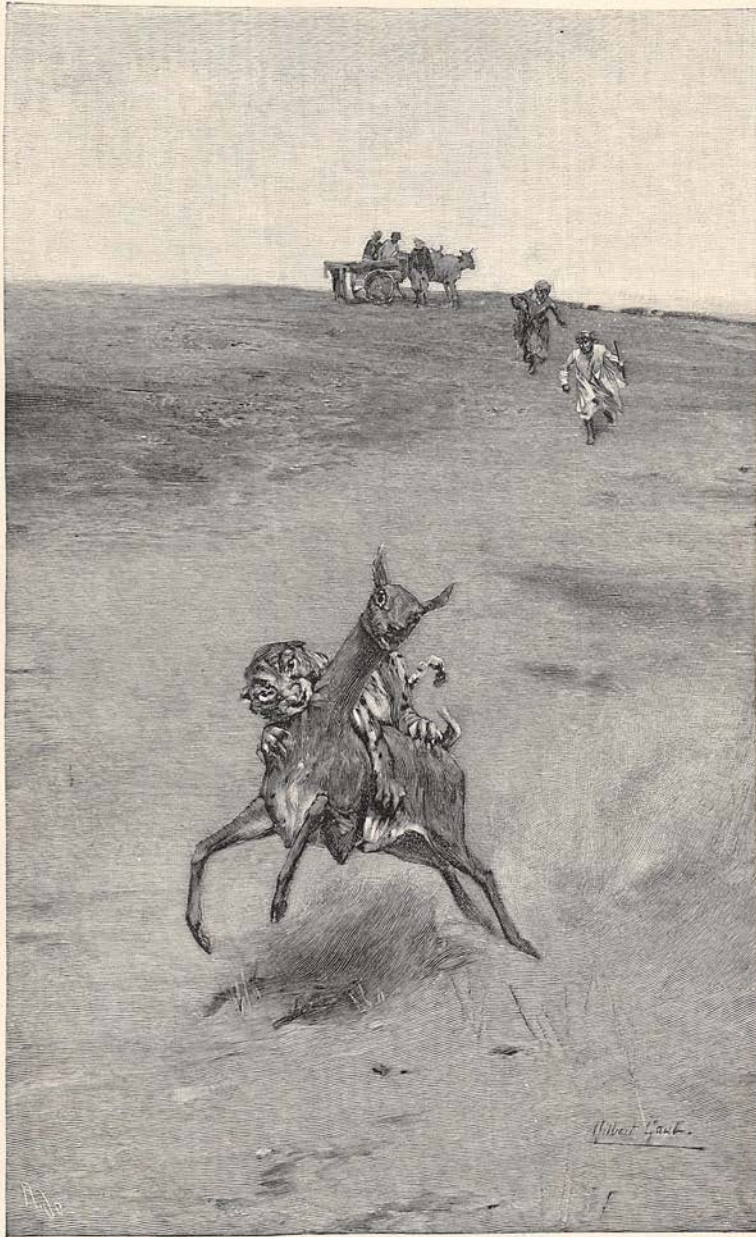
land and Scotland it has also existed. The Duke of Cumberland, brother to George IV., had two chetahs presented to him by Sir Arthur Wellesley, but his attempt to hunt with them in Windsor Park ended in a fiasco. The animal refused to attack a stag which had been turned loose within an inclosure made by strong netting about fifteen feet high. When the stag, with lowered antlers, charged the leopard, he forced it to jump the netting to escape, and the consternation produced in the crowds of visitors assembled, who promptly fled in all directions, can easily be understood, when it is stated that the chetah was known to be a particularly ferocious specimen which had once savagely attacked and maimed a keeper. This is the last recorded chetah-hunt in Europe.

It was some hours before daybreak on the morning appointed for my initiation into the mysteries of the sport, that I was awakened by my native servant knocking at the veranda door, with the announcement that his highness's *shikari* (hunter) was outside and wished to see me. With a yawn I turned out, lighted the lamp, and, opening the door, stepped out to interview him. He was bare-legged, but his head, besides being enveloped in a voluminous turban, had numerous dirty-looking scarfs and articles of clothing wrapped around it. I could hardly repress a smile, for his highness's *shikari* at this early hour more nearly resembled a bundle of dirty clothes on two skinny black legs than anything human. The *shikari* caste is a low one. The night was shivering cold, with that piercing nip in the air which

prevails in nearly all hot countries an hour or two before dawn. The man looked all shriveled up with it, and the few minutes that I stood talking with him impressed me forcibly with the fact that even in India the weather is not always hot. The *shikari* informed me that two *tongas* (bullock-carts) from the maharajah's stables were now in the compound awaiting my party, that he had sent the chetah on two or three hours before to a spot some miles away, where he knew there were several very fine black-buck to be found, and he hoped the sahibs would be ready to start without any delay, or the sun would be too high by the time we reached the place for any sport to be had. Seeing the necessity for no loss of time occurring, I ordered the *tongas* to be sent on at once after the chetah, and two open gharries to be got ready for us, for by them we could get to the meeting-place as soon or before the slower-paced oxen could manage it, even if we started half an hour later. Hastily dressing, and swallowing the *chota hazri* (early breakfast) prepared for us, our party, which included, besides my wife and myself, a young guardsman and his mother, and our servants, was soon ready to start. As we emerged silently into the dark night, I prayed that the ladies, whose faces testified to their feelings, would be repaid for the discomfort they were experiencing in this unexpected, dreary middle-of-the-night work.

At first the road was too dark to see the way we were going, but as the dawn approached, the different objects by the wayside gradually





DRAWN BY GILBERT GAUL.

THE CHETAH'S ATTACK.

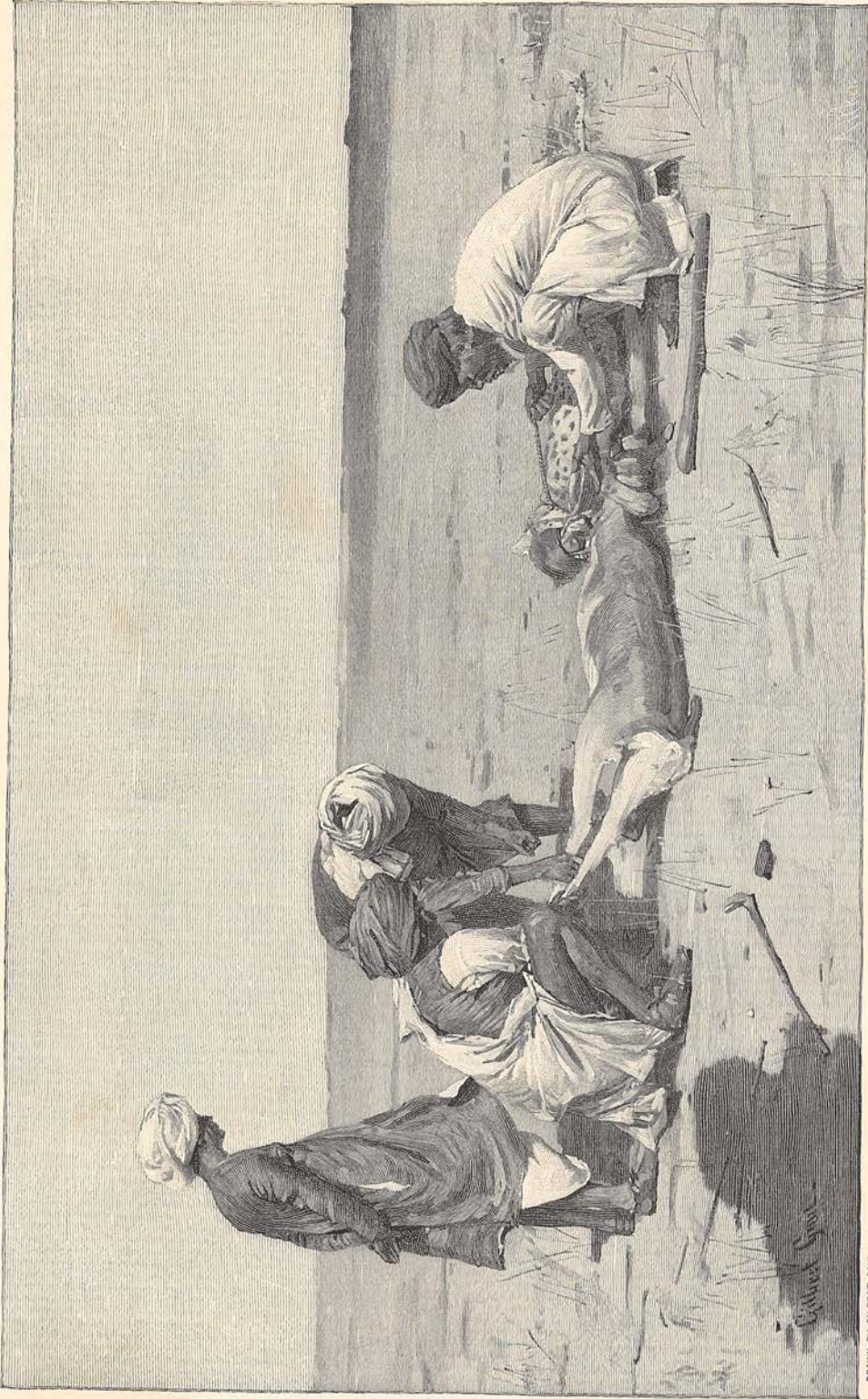
ENGRAVED BY E. A. ANDERSON.

became visible, and just as the sun rose, and bathed the whole landscape in light, we reached the appointed rendezvous. Here we found the chetah on his cart, with two attendants squatting alongside. The animal was hooded with a leathern hood that completely covered the upper part of his face, and had a strap around the loins, as well as a cord attached to his collar, by which he was bound to a rail on the cart. The vehicle was drawn by two handsome zebus, or humped oxen, which were driven by a ven-

erable-looking old man. A great deal of the success in a chetah-hunt depends on the tonga-drivers, for all the manœuvring has to be done by them. As might be expected, the maharajah, being a keen sportsman, would employ only men who were very skilful, and such we found them to be.

The method of procedure in using the chetah is for the men to get the carts as near the game as possible before liberating the animal. This is accomplished by driving around the





DRAWN BY GILBERT GAUL.

DISENGAGING THE CHETAH FROM ITS PREY.

ENGRAVED BY P. ATKEN.



antelopes in a circle, but making it gradually smaller and smaller, so that at last the requisite distance is attained. The accomplishment of this object requires some skill, but it is facilitated by the fact that over the lands on which the Indian antelopes, or black-buck, feed, the natives with their bullock-carts are perpetually passing and repassing. As these people never molest the animals, the antelopes get accustomed to their presence, and pay no attention to them. If, however, anything unusual in the appearance of their carts is discerned, then the fleet-footed creatures take instant alarm, and are off at a speed which soon carries them out of sight, leaving only a cloud of dust behind to mark the course they have taken.

Shortly after our arrival at the place where the chetah was awaiting us, the tongas arrived, and reluctantly we transferred ourselves from the comparatively comfortable carriages to the decidedly uncomfortable ox-carts. These tongas in no way differed from those in general use throughout India, but the oxen drawing them were of a finer breed, faster, and in better condition than those which the peasantry habitually employ and ill-treat. The Maharajah of Jeypore prides himself upon his oxen, as well as upon his large stud of elephants, camels, and thoroughbred Arabian horses.

On a tonga, Europeans have to sit *dos-à-dos*, similar to the position it is necessary to assume in an Irish jaunting-car. The feet rest upon a shelf hanging down over the wheel, and the legs and body are protected by guards. The back, however, is unsupported, for the seat is really intended to be used native fashion; that is, by squatting thereon, with the legs doubled up under the body. For Europeans, who cannot assume this attitude with any comfort, a shawl is folded up and made into an apology for a cushion; but as the cart has no springs, a long journey on a tonga is rather a miserable affair. Then one soon acquires some experience of oxen and their ways, and discovers that they have a decided inclination for rutty land with soft, heavy ground; these places they imagine to be easier on their feet. That this fact does not tend to lessen the inconveniences of tonga-riding is a piece of information we were destined to acquire on this occasion.

Shortly after we had fairly started on our way, the sun rendered the casting off of wraps and extra coats a necessity, and the comfort of our sun-helmets once more began to be felt. The chetah-cart led the way, our tongas followed in Indian file, and the shikari and servants brought up the rear on foot. The road soon struck off from the main highway over some cultivated land, then along very rough paths,

across a few dried-up river-beds, or *nullahs*, and ultimately emerged on to a large open plain, which extended as far as the eye could see, and in some respects suggested the prairies of America. The comparison, however, failed in certain details, for here the sky-lines were the hills of the Aravali range, small clumps of trees were to be seen dotted over the plain, and the vegetation, instead of being profuse, was scanty, for the most part being stunted shrubs, and tufts of coarse grass in a dry condition. In the far distance the castle and ruined encircling walls of Amber could be seen, and below in the valley some of the maharajah's troops were at exercise with their camel-guns and antiquated flint-lock muskets.

At last we sighted a small herd of antelope, but the shikari decided not to pay any attention to them, for none that could be discerned possessed horns fine enough to suit his idea of our requirements. He evidently knew well what he was about, for he soon brought us to a place where some fine heads could be seen. This herd we endeavored to approach, but its leaders either sighted something out of the common in the appearance of our cavalcade, or else they got wind of the chetah, for the animals were away like a flash, and we intently watched them bounding into the air, one after another, with graceful leaps, as they cleared the obstacles in their path until the distance hid them from view. Shortly afterward more animals were sighted, and this time our excitement was worked up to a state of intensity. Quietly but surely we circled nearer and nearer to the herd, but tried to appear as though we were paying no attention whatever to them. At last the distance was decreased to a little over a hundred yards, and we almost held our breath for fear of causing a stampede. Without the cart in any way stopping, the strap round the loins of the chetah was loosened, he was awakened by a vigorous twist of his tail, the cord was detached from his neck, and the hood slipped quickly from his eyes. The chetah sprang up, sighted his quarry, and with a bound, light, graceful, and soundless, sprang from the cart, and crouched low on the grass. Having got so far, however, for some reason not immediately evident, he refused to go any farther, and simply rolled round on his back and abandoned himself to the complete enjoyment of his liberty. With certain Hindustani oaths of so copious a character that they embraced the whole of that chetah's family for some generations back, one of the keepers got down and quietly approached the animal. On coming up to him the hood was deftly slipped over his eyes, the binding cord refastened, and the strap replaced round his loins. Although blind-folded, on being ordered, the animal leaped



back upon the cart with an easy bound that was grace personified, exhibiting the wonderful muscular agility he possessed.

The failure of the chetah in this case, we were told, was due to the antelope's getting too good a start; the animal's instinct guiding him under these circumstances. This may have been the case, for the efforts of nearly all members of the feline family, although rapid for short distances, are soon exhausted, and their instinct leads them to conserve their powers until all likelihood of failure in their attack is diminished. Then their movements are vigorous in the extreme. This fact we were to see displayed later on by our chetah. At first some of us were inclined to pronounce the animal too well fed or too lazy to work. We were assured, however, that it had not been given any food the day before, and must therefore be hungry, a necessary condition for it to hunt properly.

After this disappointment the tongas were again put in motion, and the men became more determined than ever that we should see some sport. We were jogged and jolted about over rough ground until our bodies were bruised and our backs tired. The sun also began to make itself felt in a way that was far from agreeable. Soon, however, we ceased to think of these small troubles, for on topping some rising ground, we again sighted antelope. Then again began the stalk, to end again, we thought, at one time, in renewed disappointment, for the herd, becoming uneasy, moved away. This they did very slowly, and without manifesting any great alarm, so off we started after them, but of course not in a direct line. In a few minutes, that to our anxious minds seemed interminable, we managed to diminish the distance to the requisite point, and again the straps were liberated. The hood was then slipped from the chetah's head. He saw the animals at once; his body quivered all over with excitement, the tail straightened, and the hackles on his shoulders stood erect, while his eyes gleamed, and he strained at the cord, which was held short. In a second it was unfastened, there was a yellow streak in the air, and the chetah was crouching low some yards away. In this position, and taking advantage of a certain unevenness of the ground which gave him cover, he stealthily crept forward toward a buck that was feeding some distance away from the others. Suddenly this antelope saw or scented his enemy, for he was off like the wind. He was, however, too late; the chetah had been too quick for him. All there was to be seen was a flash, as the supreme rush was made. This movement of the chetah is said to be, for the time it lasts, the quickest thing in the animal world, far surpassing the speed of a race-horse.

Certainly it surprised all of us, who were intently watching the details of the scene being enacted in our view. The pace was so marvelously great that the chetah actually sprang past the buck, although by this time the terrified animal was fairly stretched out at panic speed. This overshooting the mark by the chetah had the effect of driving the antelope, which swerved off immediately from his line, into running round in a circle, with the chetah on the outside. The tongas were galloped up, and the excitement of the occupants can hardly be described. In my eagerness to see the finish, I jumped off and took to running, but the hunt was soon over, for before I could get quite up, the chetah got close to the buck, and with a spring at his haunches, brought him to the ground. The leopard then suddenly released his hold, and sprang at his victim's throat, throwing his prey over on its back, where it was held when we arrived at the spot. The chetah was then crouching low, sucking the blood from the jugular vein, while tenaciously clinging with his mouth to the antelope's throat. The buck gave only a few spasmodic jerks and appeared to be dead, although probably not so in reality, but only paralyzed by fear. One of the men stooped down and plunged a knife into the buck's neck close to the spot where the chetah still held fast. This *coup de grâce* not only terminated the poor thing's existence, but caused the blood to flow freely, which one of the men proceeded to catch in a large wooden bowl with a long handle, that he had brought for the purpose. When this was full, the hood was thrust over the chetah's eyes, his fetters were replaced, and he was ultimately induced to let go his hold of the antelope by the bowl of steaming hot blood being slipped under his nose. Into this dainty reward for his trouble he at once plunged his head, and with ferocious eagerness lapped up the whole of it.

However, he did not submit to be led away from his prey without a protest, for he gave some low, ominous snarls, looked wicked, and tugged at the cords by which he was held. These proceedings on his part, together with the gory appearance he presented after his feast, drove the ladies from the scene. His head, limbs, and portions of his body were covered with the blood, and it was running out of his jaws. He was such a repulsive-looking beast that we were all glad when he had been taken back to the cart. The shikari, meanwhile, had been busy with the dead buck, getting it ready to be carried away, and his proceedings were not of a nature to allay the ladies' distaste for the whole affair, which, the excitement being all over, and the reaction setting in, they expressed in a decided manner.

As the sun was now like a ball of fire high



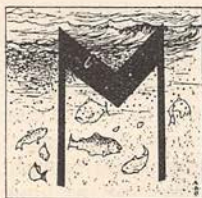
up in a steel-blue dome, and we were all hungry, thirsty, tired, and hot, we decided to return home without trying for another antelope. After a bath and tiffin we all felt in a different humor, but the consensus of opinion condemned hunting with the chetah as poor sport from a European standpoint. Its extraordinary attractions for the inhabitants of Eastern countries we could, however, well understand. It requires but little exertion on the part of the hunters themselves, and there are many different objects of intense interest to be followed—the careful manœuvring in stalking the game, the loosening of the subtle animal,

the excitement of watching its stealthy approach, in which a wonderful display of craft and agility is exhibited, then the lightning-like rapidity of its movements, and the flight of the terror-stricken antelope. Finally, the supreme moment having arrived, there comes the graceful but terrible spring which brings the quarry in the death-grip of the powerful cat. The whole sport is in fact an exhibition of animal powers exerted in the form most attractive to Oriental minds. But the day is not far off when hunting with the chetah will be a thing of the past, and there will be but few people left who will mourn the fact.

*J. Fortuné Nott.*

## THE GUESTS OF MRS. TIMMS.

I.



RS. PERSIS FLAGG stood in her front doorway taking leave of Miss Cynthia Pickett, who had just been making a long call. They were not intimate friends. Miss Pickett always came formally to

the front door and rang when she paid her visits, but, the week before, they had met at the county conference, and had been sent to the same house for entertainment, and so had deepened and renewed the pleasures of acquaintance.

It was an afternoon in early June; the syringa-bushes were tall and green on each side of the stone doorsteps, and were covered with their lovely white and golden flowers. Miss Pickett broke off the nearest twig, and held it before her prim face as she talked. She had a pretty childlike smile that came and went suddenly, but her face was not one that bore the marks of many pleasures. Mrs. Flagg was a tall, commanding sort of person, with an air of satisfaction and authority.

"Oh, yes, gather all you want," she said stiffly, as Miss Pickett took the syringa without having asked beforehand; but she had an amiable expression, and just now her large countenance was lighted up by pleasant anticipation.

"We can tell early what sort of a day it's goin' to be," she said eagerly. "There ain't a cloud in the sky now. I'll stop for you as I come along, or if there should be anything un-

foreseen to detain me, I'll send you word. I don't expect you'd want to go if it wa' n't so that I could?"

"Oh my sakes, no!" answered Miss Pickett, discreetly, with a timid flush. "You feel certain that Mis' Timms won't be put out? I should n't feel free to go unless I went 'long o' you."

"Why, nothin' could be plainer than her words," said Mrs. Flagg in a tone of reproof. "You saw how she urged me, an' had over all that talk about how we used to see each other often when we both lived to Longport, and told how she'd been thinkin' of writin', and askin' if it wa' n't so I should be able to come over and stop three or four days as soon as settled weather come, because she could n't make no fire in her best chamber on account of the chimbley smokin' if the wind wa' n't just right. You see how she felt toward me, kissin' of me comin' and goin'? Why, she even asked me who I employed to do over my bonnet, Miss Pickett, just as interested as if she was a sister; an' she remarked she should look for us any pleasant day after we all got home, an' were settled after the conference."

Miss Pickett smiled, but did not speak, as if she expected more arguments still.

"An' she seemed just about as much gratified to meet with you again. She seemed to desire to meet you again very particular," continued Mrs. Flagg. "She really urged us to come together an' have a real good day talkin' over old times—there, don't le' 's go all over it again! I've always heard she'd made that old house of her aunt Bascom's where she