



THE CHEETAH HUNTING.

THE HUNTING LEOPARD.



HIS elegant animal, the cheetah, or hunting leopard, is spread extensively throughout Africa and India. Mr. Bennett observes that Chardin, Bernier, Tavernier, and others of the older travellers, had related that in several parts of Asia it was customary to make use of a large spotted cat in the pursuit of game, and that this animal was called youze in Persia, and cheetah in India; but the statements of these writers were so imperfect, that it was next to impossible to recognise the particular species intended. We now, however, know with certainty that the animal thus employed is the *Felis jubata* of naturalists, which inhabits the greater part both of Asia and Africa.

It is common in India and Sumatra, as well as in Persia, and is well known both in Senegal and at the Cape of Good Hope; but the ingenuity of the savage natives of the latter countries has not, so far as we know, been exerted in rendering its services available in the

chase in a manner so successfully practised by the more refined and civilized inhabitants of Persia and Hindostan.

The cheetah differs in one or two points from the more typical of its race. The *Felidæ* in general possess a broad rounded paw, armed with sharp-hooked and completely retractile claws, which are protruded at pleasure; but in the cheetah the foot is long and narrow, and more like that of a dog; while the claws, from the laxity of the spring-ligaments, are very partially retracted, and are consequently worn and blunted at the points. As large in the body as the leopard, the cheetah is superior to that animal in height, and differs from it also in general figure. In the first place, the limbs, unadapted for climbing, are long, slender, and tapering; and the body, which is deficient in breadth, reminds one in some degree of that of the greyhound. In consequence of these differences, Wagler separated it into a distinct genus, under the title of *Cynailurus*, in allusion to its intermediate station between the canine and feline races.

The African cheetah has been by some regarded as a distinct species from that of India, under the supposition that the thin mane which covers the back of the neck was characteristic only of the African animal. Under this impression, the term *jubata* (maned) was restricted to the African, and the term *venatica* (hunting) given to the Indian, cheetah. This is, however, altogether erroneous.

In India the wild animal has a rough coat in which the mane is marked; but domesticated animals from the same part of the country are destitute of a mane, and have a smooth coat. The general colour of the cheetah is fawn-yellow, covered with round black spots; a distinct black stripe passes from the inner angle of the eye to the angle of the mouth. The tip of the nose is black. The profile of the forehead and face is convex; the eye is peculiarly large, fine, and expressive; the pupils are circular; the tail is long, and curled up at its extremity, which is white; the fur is not sleek, but rather crisp. The skin of the cheetah is an article of some importance in trade at Senegal, but is neglected at the Cape of Good Hope: this animal, called Luipard by the Dutch colonists, is indeed rare in that district, but the skin is occasionally seen worn by Kaffir chiefs, by way of distinction.

In Africa, the rude natives never dream of employing the cheetah as a means of procuring food; they know not its value in the chase. In Persia and India it has, however, been employed from an early period.

In the "Field-Sports of India," the mode of coursing with the cheetah is thus described:—"They (the cheetahs) are led out in chains, with blinds over their eyes, and sometimes carried out in carts;

and when antelopes or deer are seen on a plain, should any of them be separated from the rest, the cheetah's head is brought to face it, the blinds are removed and the chain is taken off. He immediately crouches and creeps along with his belly almost touching the ground, until he gets within a short distance of the deer, who, although seeing him approach, appears so fascinated that he seldom attempts to run away. The cheetah then makes a few surprising springs, and seizes the deer by the neck. If many deer are near each other, they often escape by flight, their number, perhaps, giving them confidence."

We may add to this that the cheetah takes advantage of every means of making its attack, and that, when unsuccessful in its effort, it returns sullenly to its keeper, who replaces the hood, and reserves him for another opportunity. When, however, he has grappled with the quarry and fixed himself upon its throat, drinking the life-blood warm, his nature breaks out in all its violence, so that it requires some management to separate him from his victim. Partly awed by the keeper's voice, partly enticed by pieces of meat, and a ladleful of the blood, he is induced to relinquish the prize, and submit to be again hooded. In all this we are reminded of the art of falconry.

In captivity the cheetah is familiar, gentle, and playful; and becomes greatly attached to those who feed or notice it. The general disposition of these beautiful creatures is, indeed, frank and confiding; and consequently there is little trouble in rendering them perfectly domestic. Their voice of pleasure is a *pur*; of uneasiness or hunger, a short reiterated *mew*.