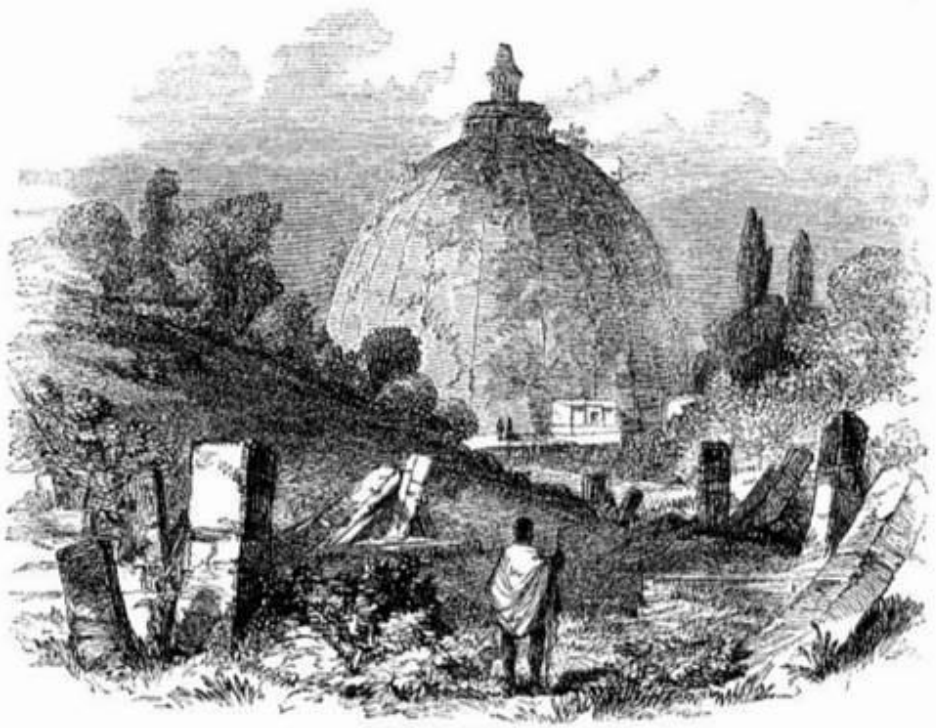


RUINS AT POLLANARUA.

## A HOME IN THE CINNAMON ISLE.

IT was about the time that Alexander the Great began the restoration of Babylon, in order to adapt it to become the capital of the world, that the city of Pollanarua was founded. The site chosen was lovely. One of the richest plains of the Island of Ceylon. In front of the principal gate a silvery lake, imbedded in a park of tamarinds, and other tropical trees, and dotted with the gorgeous blossoms of the pink lotus: carpet-like lawns here, covered with sagacious elephants; there, golden corn-fields, with rows of palm for fences, under whose shade sturdy buffaloes rested from the day's labor. In a few years it was a great city. Four miles stretched the main street, in a perfectly straight line, between royal palms. On either side were splendid dwellings, with gilded domes; temples to strange gods, with massive statues in front; groves of cocoa-nut, and stately arecas. In the centre of the city was reared the great Dagoba, the national monument. A pedestal two hundred and sixty feet high; above the pedestal two colossal steps, each twenty feet high by fifty wide, serving to support broad flights of stairs; above these, a dome of solid brick-work, covered with polished stucco varied by bas-reliefs; above the dome another pedestal, a cube of some thirty feet, wholly of stucco; on this a tall spire thickly gilt; and this last crowned with a golden umbrella. From this Dagoba radiated all the great streets in the city. On one of them stood the palace of the King of Pollanarua, a lofty building, with octagon towers at the corners; on another the rock temple, with the gigantic idols of Buddha staring pitilessly at the devotee as he entered. The whole swarmed with human beings. No censuses were there in those days in the Cinnamon Isle, and no man can say how many hundreds of thousands dwelt in Pollanarua, or in that far greater city of Ceylon, Anaradupoora, whose ruins cover two hundred and fifty-six square miles. But this we know; they were like the insects of the jungle, crowded, heaped, packed together—vastly relieved, in truth, when the Queen of the South set her armies in motion from her great city of Mahagam, or the Malabars took the field from the North, and fell upon Pollanarua, and slaughtered their tens of thousands.

Another stride through time, and about the period when Christian nations went to war with the Saracen for the Holy Sepulchre, some unknown enemy destroyed Pollanarua. Not the buildings themselves—the Dagoba was for the most part almost indestructible—but the people, men, women, and children. How it was done no one knows. Probably the enemy gained possession of the high lands above the city and cut off the supply of water; which would put an end to all agricultural operations, cause speedy famine, and soon enable the jungle to encroach upon the city, and breed devastating pestilences. Perhaps the cold steel and the flames had a large share in the work. Anyhow, Pollanarua was depopulated.

Now one common turf covers houses, and people, and streets, and sculptures. The Dagoba is there in massive ruin; but a banyan-tree has struck its roots through the brick-work,

and cleft it in two; and the fragments are so overgrown with jungle-grass and lichens that they look like mere mounds of earth, which the traveler might pass without notice. Elsewhere, fragments of the old huge idols protrude from the jungle, and here and there a pair of dull eyes stare at the intruder as they stared at worshipers a thousand years ago; beside them, mayhap, lie slabs of granite graven with elaborate inscriptions which — like the dialect in which Eliot's Bible was written—are now a sealed letter to the most learned. Amidst the desolate ruins crouch the fiery leopard and the hungry bear: the jackal deserts them, for they do not contain a single bone he can pick.

The history of Pollanarua is that of the whole island. Our North American Indians are not fading more rapidly from the earth than the native Cingalese. The jungle is closing around them, and every year disease tightens its grip. One season, cholera or fever attacks a village of two hundred souls, and carries off half of them. The survivors are unable to keep the same quantity of land under cultivation as formerly; and in consequence, next season, the jungle has closed still further upon them, and the fatal epidemic returns with fresh violence. Reduced to a miserable few who can not even cultivate their rice-plots, the remaining tenants of the village wait passively for cholera to exterminate them, which it does in a couple of seasons at farthest, leaving nothing but a few towering cocoa-nut trees to show where a village once stood.

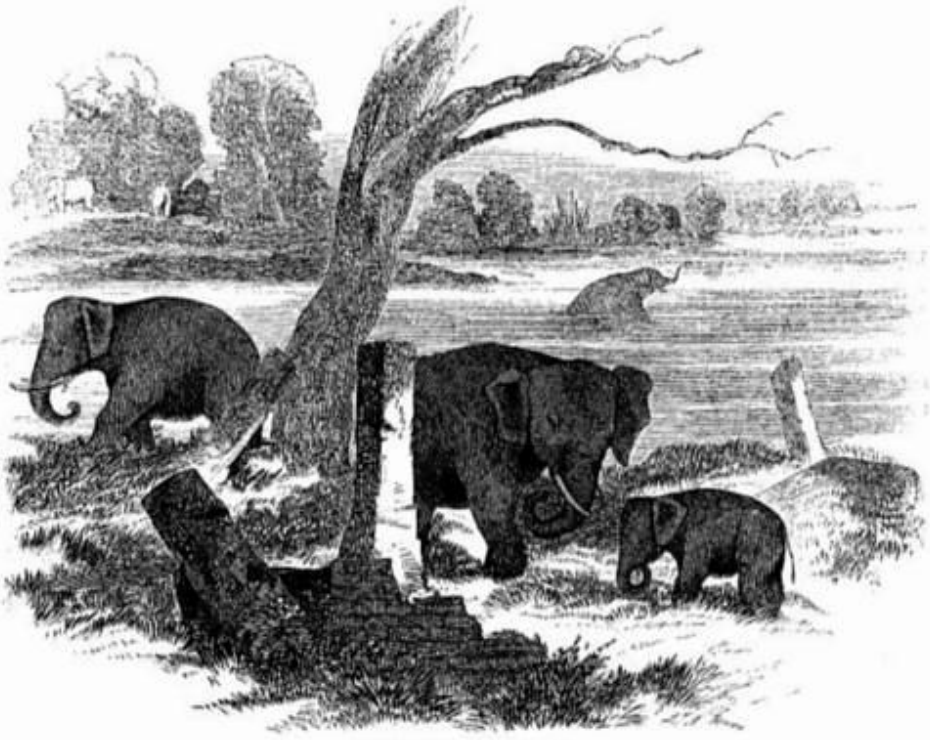
In olden time the science of irrigation was thoroughly understood by the Cingalese, and immense tracts of land were kept under cultivation by a system of tanks and canals. But in the old wars most of these were destroyed, and the people have not had the enterprise, nor the British colonial government the sagacity to restore them. The consequence is, that from being one of the greatest rice-growing countries in the world, Ceylon now imports rice from India; and the jungle-grass has overgrown the lands on which this staple was formerly grown. So utterly wretched is the soil, and so improvident have been its owners, that it is now becoming unprofitable even to plant coffee there, and the only articles of production which pay are cinnamon and cocoa-nuts—both of which luxuriate in a dry, sandy soil.

In the mountains tracts of land are found which, with plenty of manure, may be made to produce most of the necessaries of life. Some six or seven years ago, an Englishman, Mr. S. W. Baker, purchased a tract at a place called Newera Ellia, or Royal Plains, peopled it with English emigrants, and stocked it with cattle. He met with the usual mishaps of pioneers. One day a pair of his best Australian horses ran away, and smashed a carriage and themselves. Then a cow—a thorough-bred Durham short-horn—died, on the way up to the settlement, from the heat. Then his groom, after investigating the quality of the native liquors, rode his best elephant to death. Finally, his settlers, of course, took the earliest opportunity of quarreling with him, and going to law. Happily for him he was blessed with patience and perseverance; bore all trials with fortitude, buried his murdered cattle, and imprisoned his refractory tenants; and, in the end, had the satisfaction of seeing his settlement thrive, and his farmers accumulate small fortunes by dint of large doses of economy and manure.

He would have borne the struggle with fortune less patiently had he been less of a sportsman. Ceylon, as every one knows, is the Paradise of Nimrods. South Africa beats it, indeed; but who has hunted its wildernesses save Mr. Gordon Cumming? The elephant, the bear, the wild boar, the leopard, the elk—besides countless other denizens of the forest, of less note—abound in the silent jungles of Ceylon; many and many a week did the lord of the manor of Newera Ellia spend in hunting them down. A hunter, he, in the grain. None of your amateur gunners, who run out of town for a day or two at a time to shoot woodcock, or even murder moose; but a methodical, business-like sportsman, regarding the craft as one of the highest vocations to which a man can be called—a man who knows of nothing that can give such a delightful feeling of calm excitement as wild sports—who buries a couple of favorite hounds side by side, and tearfully exclaims, "There are no truer dogs on the earth than the two that lie there together!"—who can not even talk of a hunt without bursting into a parenthetic "Yoicks! for-r-r-rard!"—who speaks of his double-barreled four-ounce No. 10 rifle with emotion and gratitude, and sits down mournfully, in a dearth of game, to shoot crocodiles for fear of being idle.

The elephant is, of course, the royal game of Ceylon. The Cingalese variety of the beast is inferior to that of Africa, as it is rarely a "tusker." Now and then an elephant is found with tusks; but, unlike all other races of elephants, the animals usually shot on the island have nothing but miserable little grubbers, projecting two or three inches from the jaw and pointing downward. Still they are fine hunting, and to come upon a herd of them browsing quietly on the tall rushy grass in one of the old deserted tanks—as happened to Mr. Baker and a friend of his—must have been tolerably exciting.

They spent half an hour behind the trees watching the beasts disport themselves in the cool water; then, sending a party of Cingalese round to the enemy's flank to shout and terrify him, the hunters and their men took up a position at the outlet of the tank. The Cingalese howl was followed instantly by a mighty roar of water caused by the rush of the herd, and at this moment the excitement was tremendous. The natives saw no fun in the sport, and scrambled up trees; Baker and his friend cocked their rifles with a grim smile. On came the elephants, dashing up the spray before them, when, to the horror of the hunters, just as they



TANK SCENE AT EVENING.

were at twenty paces' distance, the frightened natives scrambled still higher in the trees, and gave the alarm by their noise. The leaders veered round in an instant. Baker and his friend, having no choice, leaped down among them, and bagged a couple each with the regulation shot behind the ear. The others took to the water, which was too deep to admit of a foot-race; but Baker, judging that they would again attempt to enter the jungle at some distance, followed them on the edge of the lake. His suspicion was verified; he had just time to ensconce himself behind a tree on the margin of the tank when the roar of the rushing water was heard. Again the stupid natives spoilt the sport by showing themselves, and the herd galloped off, dashing the spray before them. Thus detected, Baker threw off all disguise, and ran toward the herd as best he could through the water, shouting and screaming in order to induce the old bulls to charge; but his challenge was unheeded, and the elephants, with remarkable sagacity, scattered in all directions, and made for a piece of thick jungle a couple of hundred yards off. In despair, he knocked over the hindmost with a long shot; when, to his delight he heard one of the leading bulls trumpet shrilly, and rock his head from side to side with ears cocked. Baker knew that this meant fight, and redoubled his shouts.

The chase was terrific. Forty yards still divided the hunter and his prey, and blown as the former was, there was every chance that the herd would reach the jungle before him. His only hope was that the angry bull would turn on him. But, to his disgust, when the herd did win the race and reach the jungle, this fellow rushed in with the others.

The disappointment lasted but for a few seconds. After seeing the other elephants safe, he of the cocked ears came rushing out again in full charge. It was, as the grim hunter says, "very plucky, but foolish," for he straightway bagged him by the forehead shot.

Almost immediately afterward he heard a tremendous roaring behind him; and loading his rifles hastily, ran to the spot. Instead of the herd he had hoped to find, he saw a young elephant, four feet high, who, being fool-hardy, as became his years, charged the hunter directly. Baker—vastly to the disgust of the natives—laid aside his rifle, and as the young brute rushed at him, jumped on one side and caught him by the tail. Then followed a comical scene. The juvenile elephant ran away with Baker without feeling him: he called to the natives to bring ropes or cotton cloths to tie his legs, but they were too frightened to come. A couple of gun-bearers ran to his assistance, and took a twist in the brute's tail, but it was of no use; he ran away with all three of them like a steam-engine running off with an empty railroad-car. So Baker was obliged at last to send for a gun and settle him.

This business done, and his huntsman's blood being up, he turned to other game. Attacking a Cingalese for his cowardice, the fellow laughed in his face; whereupon Baker cut a stout

stick. The native ran off at top speed, and the hunter gave chase. It was a long run, but, as the victor says, "I ran into him at last in heavy ground, and I dare say he recollects the day of the month."

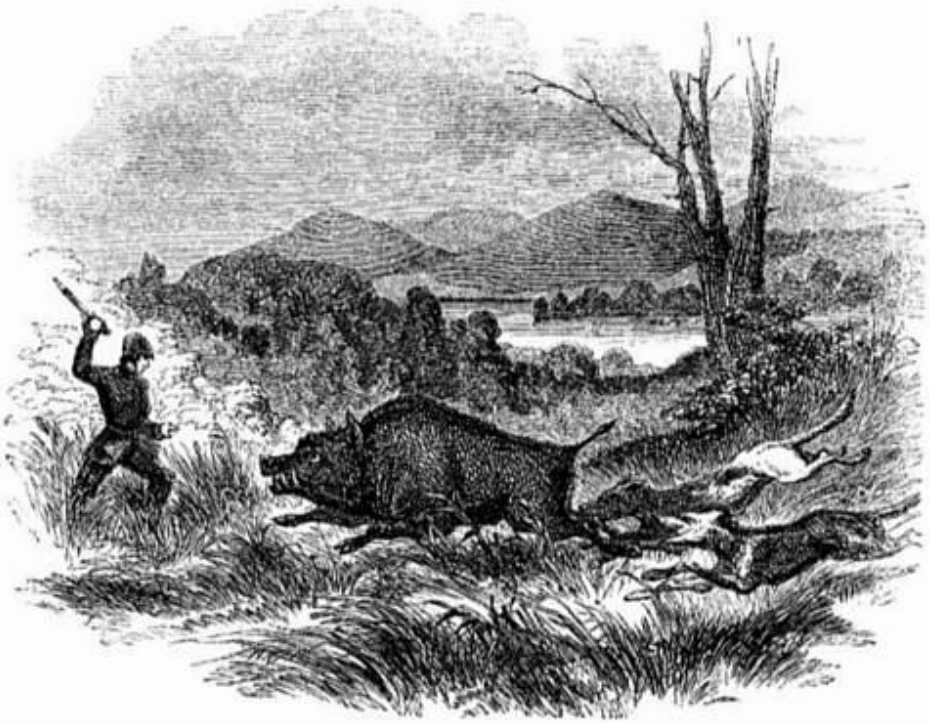
As a general rule Cingalese elephants are shot almost *à bout portant*. Eight or ten paces are the usual firing distance, and the brain is invariably the part aimed at. When Mr. Baker arrived in Ceylon, with his usual earnestness he went straight to the museum, and spent a week studying the anatomy of an elephant's skull. When his studies were over, he felt assured that, from whatever direction he fired, he would be able to hit the brain. It was well for him he could.

Walking through the jungle one day, he suddenly noticed a young tree, as thick as a man's thigh, shake violently over his head. Looking up he saw, just above him, the trunk of an elephant, who was engaged in barking the tree as high as he could reach with his trunk. There was no time to be lost; the next moment the elephant would perceive him. He raised the rifle, took the eccentric line for the brain, and fired upward through the jaw. The ball had to pass through bones and tough membranes for a distance of two feet; but the rifle was true, and "a hard hitter," and the animal fell stone dead, with the wad smoking in the wound.

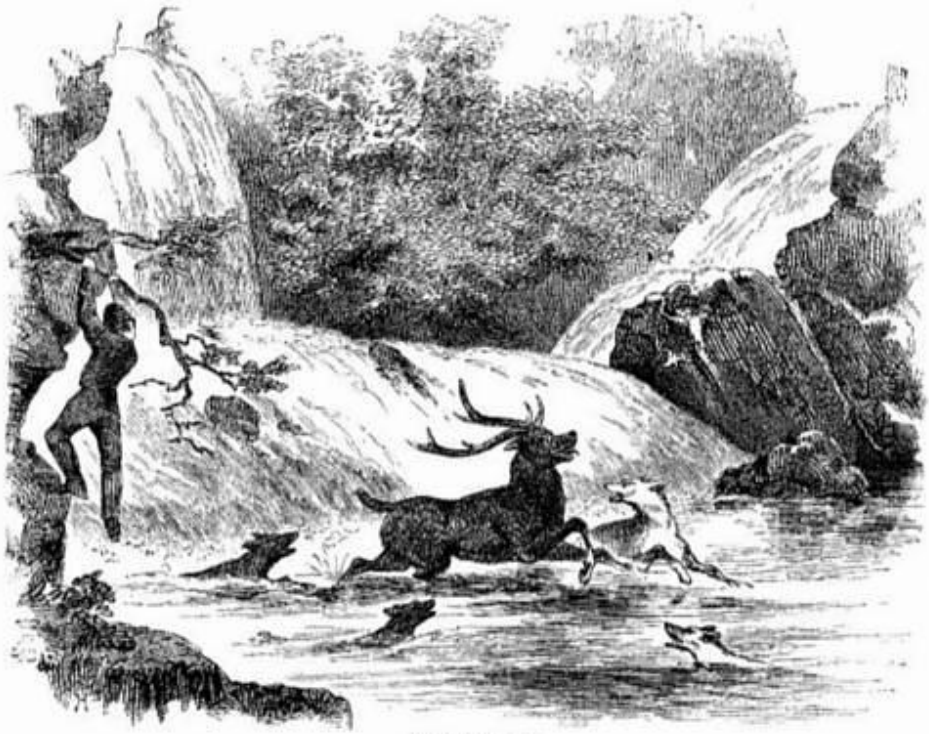
It appears quite common to approach elephants as close as this without seeing them, so nearly does the color of their hide resemble that of the decaying and burnt jungle. Mr. Baker often took aim at an elephant which was within eight paces of him, when a friend who was at his elbow could not see him at all.

The wild boar is not bad sport, though not to be mentioned in the same month with the elephant. Of course, for such game one does not take gun or rifle. The long boar-spear, sharply and freshly pointed, is the consecrated weapon, and Mr. Baker admits that, for the encounter, it is the best possible. But it is no easy matter to carry a boar-spear over the rugged mountains in the highlands without blunting it against some awkward rock or other; and the hunter of Newera Ellia, accordingly, preferred the knife. "A boar," says he, sententiously, "which can beat off a good pack of dogs and a long knife, deserves, in my opinion, to escape." His own knife was a model. It was one foot long, exclusive of the handle, and the blade was two inches broad in the widest part; the whole knife weighed three pounds. The blade was shaped somewhat after the fashion of the Nepaulese creases, slightly concave in the middle; which peculiarity gave great force to a blow, and rendered it as formidable a weapon as any Western bowie-knife.

Strolling through the jungle one day with the hounds, he came upon the track of a boar. The dogs went off in full chorus; and presently was heard the rush of the boar through the jungle, followed by the bay of the pack. Plunging and tearing through the tangled grass, Baker reached the scene of action in time to see the boar in deadly conflict with half a dozen of the bravest dogs. His own knife was drawn ready. The moment the boar saw him, it shook off the dogs



CLOSE QUARTERS.



THE ELK HUNT.

with a surprising effort and charged him. He sprang aside, and instinctively made a cut at the boar with the knife as it passed. To his amazement the brute fell dead on the spot; and on looking at the wound, it appeared so huge that the animal seemed half divided. The fact was, in the act of springing the boar had distended the muscles of his back to the utmost degree of tightness, and the heavy knife falling upon them at right angles, had severed not only the muscles but the spine, and entered the vitals. This distension of the muscles is the secret of the feats performed by the Asiatic swordsmen—such as cutting off a buffalo's head at a blow. The animal's head is tied down, and in endeavoring to raise it, it distends the muscles so "taut" that the least blow with a sharp edge will divide them.

The boar's flesh is poor eating. The Cingalese enjoy it; but Mr. Baker had too often seen the boars feasting on the putrid carcasses of dead elephants to like it. Better feeding, in every way, is to be had when a good fat elk has been run down. The elk is the royal game for horse and hound in Ceylon; and the Lord of Newera Ellia, as an old follower of the British hounds, liked nothing better than a day's race after a well-fed buck.

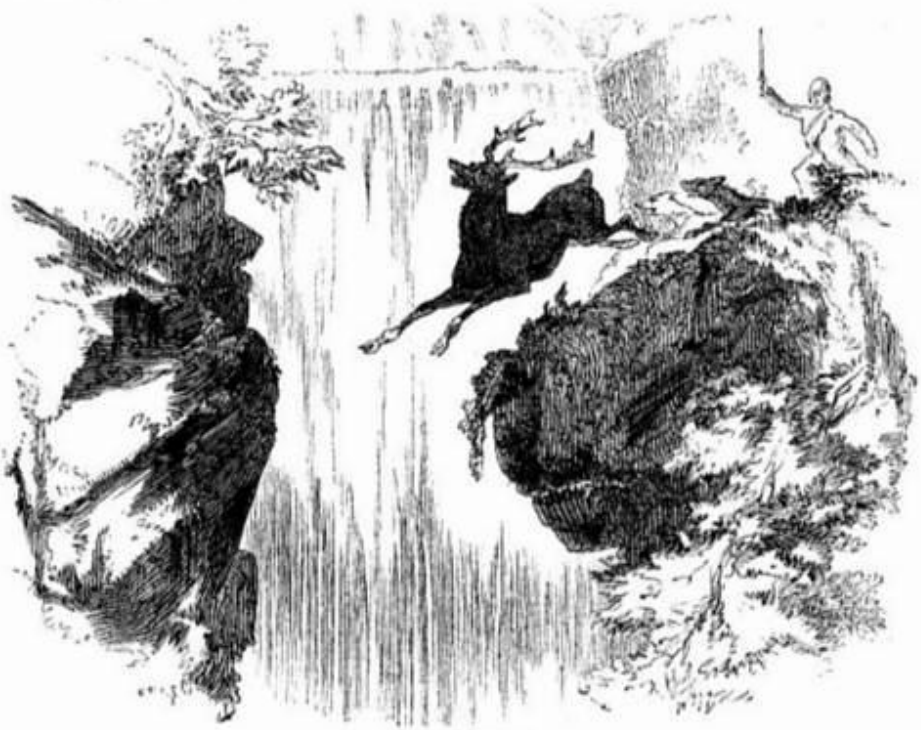
Even these sports are not devoid of danger in the hilly country of Ceylon. One fine morning in May, 1853, Mr. Baker was out with the pack and fell upon the fresh track of an elk. The dogs went off in full cry, and after half an hour's sharp run up hill and down dale, the hunter broke cover close to the elk, a magnificent fellow, thirteen hands high, with every nerve on the stretch, and nostril distended. Close to the spot where they were ran a precipitous mountain torrent, banked on either side by high rugged rocks. The buck slowly picked his way down the rock side, the pack following, and Baker himself, over ground which nothing would have induced him to travel in cold blood. A few yards below the spot where they were the torrent fell over a cliff with a roar like a mighty cataract. Heedless of the falls and the sound, the pack rushed on, baying, till the buck, having reached the bottom, and seeing that retreat was impossible, boldly leaped across. Poor fellow! he had miscalculated the distance. He lighted upon a shelving rock so steep that he could not retain his foothold, and slid slowly down into the water. Two of the best dogs, in spite of the hunter's efforts, dashed down after the elk, and in a moment all three were rolling over and over in the torrent, and drifting toward the fall. Baker was in agony; the couple were his favorite dogs. He hallooed, screamed, beckoned; but they could neither hear nor see him. He had given them up, when all at once they struck upon a ledge in the torrent, overgrown with lemon-grass, and scrambled ashore. Meanwhile the buck swam to a safe landing-place, breasting the fierce torrent nobly; and the rest of the pack, fired at the sight, likewise plunged into the water. One of them, a favorite bitch, went over the fall, and was never seen more; but the others, by dint of good luck and strength of limb, contrived to make their way across and land close on the elk's heels.

Then the chase was renewed, the antlered king leading dogs and men a tremendous race through brush and briar. At length the dogs drove him again toward the torrent. He sprang down ledge after ledge, and at last arrived on a platform some twenty feet wide, which overhung the abyss below the fall. From hence there was no escape. It was impossible to reascend the precipice down which master elk had leaped, and the dogs were on his heels, driving him to the edge of the platform. On the very brink he stood — looking as proud and as brave as ever—when Mr. Baker reached the spot. Fearful lest the hounds should press on him and he should throw a few of them over, the hunter resolved to hamstring him, and cheered the dogs on. But the elk, looking boldly in his face, made one charge, scattered the hounds, then turning, looked over the ledge and leaped into the abyss. It was the work of a second—a crash—and the royal elk lay a mass of broken bones at the bottom.

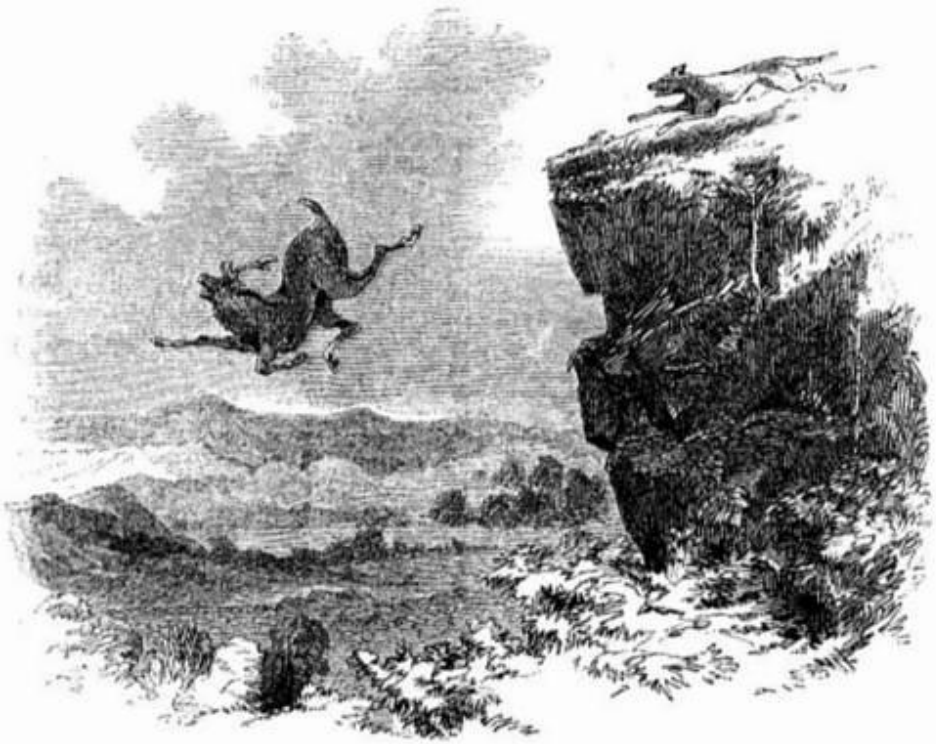
Another buck committed suicide in precisely the same way shortly afterward. Only one dog was following him—that one a splendid hunter—both were going like rockets, and unconsciously nearing a chasm of great depth. To look at them, it seemed that their impetus must of necessity carry both of them over. Happily for the dog, he sprang at the buck close to the edge and struck his ear; the check saved him. The buck, on the contrary, went clean over, and spun round and round in his descent till the centrifugal motion drew out his legs and neck as straight as a line. An awful sight to see so large an animal rushing through the air with such fearful momentum!

The dogs who figure in these hunts were Mr. Baker's grand allies, endowed, as he is persuaded, with reason almost human. His great "finder"—Bluebeard—was a fox-hound, whose understanding in his trade appears to have been equal to the average of man's. He could tell the date of a track by its appearance, and when once started on a cold scent, never lost it till the hunters had run into the game. More than once, when an elk had taken to the water and made off through the jungle, would old Bluebeard plunge in at the very spot where the game had left the shore, and swim across the stream, and up or down for great distances, until he came upon the exact point at which the elk had landed. There was no deceiving him. He was killed at last, poor fellow! while on the track of an elk. He had been leading the pack, and the other dogs and the hunters were following, when all at once Mr. Baker came up with Bluebeard, sitting up and looking faint. He was covered with blood, and five holes were cut in his throat by a leopard's claws. He choked and strained so violently that it was plain his windpipe was injured; but he had persevered in the chase till his breath failed him. His master had him slung in a blanket and carried homeward between two men; but he never reached his kennel, and lies buried in a decent grave.

These leopards are the most troublesome vermin on the island. They are cowardly, as many varieties of the feline tribe are; stalk their game, hiding themselves until the mo-



THE ELK'S LEAP.



THE LAST PLUNGE.

ment comes for the spring. Then they fly through the air and fasten their teeth and claws in an animal's throat, while they throw their body on its back with such a wrench that the spine of the victim is generally broken. Such strength have they in their claws, that with a single blow they will rip open a bullock; and from their being constantly engaged in tearing putrid flesh, their scratch is generally venomous. The Ceylon bears—which adopt very similar tactics, and have been known to tear off a man's face like a mask with a single blow of their paws—are less troublesome than the leopards, from the reason that they are more savage, and keep at a greater distance from settlements.

The leopard will eat any thing. He is seen gorging the putrid flesh of slaughtered elephants, and has been known to tear open a grave to gnaw the human dead. But his especial luxury is a sheepfold or a cattle-pen. They will sometimes scratch a hole through a thatched shed in order to get at cows. Now and then, however, they pay the penalty of their daring, as when the calf is with the native Cingalese cow she is very pugnacious.

One dark, rainy night, as the blacksmith at Newera Ellia had locked his door and tucked the bed-clothes round himself and his wife, a leopard came sneaking round, and soon discovered, by the scent, a fine cow and calf within a shed. After examining the shed closely, to see if there was no aperture, and finding that it was tight and close, the vermin sprang upon the roof and began to tear away the thatch. But the sharpness of scent was not all on his side. As he sniffed the cow, she sniffed him; and while he was scratching the thatch, she was standing below, *en garde*, ready for a charge. In a moment down he came with a spring. The cow was ready for him. As he sprang she charged, and pinned him to the wall with her horns. A fight ensued of the most terrific nature. The blacksmith, aroused by the noise, hastened to load a pistol and proceed to the scene of action. When he reached the door, however, he bethought himself that caution was the better part of valor, and therefore discreetly looked through the keyhole. The growls of the leopard had ceased; but there was the cow, mad with fury, tossing a dark mass into the air, catching it on her horns as it fell, then pinning it to the wall with a savage charge as it lamely endeavored to crawl away. This was the beef-eater in reduced circumstances. Taking courage from the sight, the blacksmith opened the door and fired his pistol at the dying leopard. Startled by the sound, the cow, whose blood was up, dashed at the man, and he had actually some trouble in escaping the infuriated animal.

Leopards are often shot, and once Mr. Baker saw one run into by dogs, and finally polished off with a hunting-knife. But this is rare; and unless the pack is strong, woe to the dog that assails or ventures within reach of the spring of the powerful animal.

Altogether, Ceylon is a fine place for a sportsman. With all the excitement of the buffalo-

hunts, and bear-hunts, and wolf-chases in the West, they must still fall short, in respect of thrilling sensations, of the jungle beat in Ceylon. The latter has its drawbacks, of course, which almost counterbalance the rattlesnakes and mosquitoes of some of our best hunting-grounds. There are the centipedes, small fellows about four inches long, which creep under people's clothes and sting like a wasp; not venomous, but very troublesome. On one of Mr. Baker's hunts, one of his friends was accompanied by an Irish corporal named Phinn, who was new to the country. Just after dinner, Phinn was sitting down to commence his own meal, when he sprang up, capered about the room like a madman, and, with both hands on the hinder-part of his inexpressibles, howled: "Och! help, Sir, help! I've some divil up my breeches! Oh! bad luck to him, he's bitin' me! Oh! oh! it's a sarpent that's stingin' me! Quick, Sir, or he'll be the death of me!" The frantic corporal's inexpressibles were lowered, regardless of decency, and a fine little centipede liberated from a rather tight situation.

Ticks—tiny creatures no bigger than a grain of sand—are almost as great a plague. Their bite is compared to a red-hot needle thrust into the flesh. They, too, seem to have a predilection for the friendly shelter of a trowser-leg; and so acute is the smart, that loyal Mr. Baker frankly confesses that if the royal family were present he couldn't help tearing off the garment the moment he felt the bite.

In the swamps and deserted tanks leeches are troublesome. Men guard against them with proper gaiters, but dogs sometimes suffer severely from their bite. One of Mr. Baker's best hounds was drinking at a pool, when a leech crept up its nostril. The dog tried to shake it out, but it clung fast. The hunter tried his best, with injections of salt and water and the other prescribed methods, but the leech kept his hold; and, being of that species which the wise man certifies will never cry Enough! it actually lived for two months in the poor dog's nose. It might have been there still, had it not one day, in the exuberance of its joy at the comfort of its lodgings, indiscreetly taken to wag its tail, when a dexterous finger and thumb extracted it.

Another troublesome insect is the white ant, which eats out the heart of the largest timber logs in an incredibly short space of time. The natives have a curious way of getting rid of them. When they discover an ant hole, they pour a little treacle near the spot. This attracts another species of ants, the black ants, between whom and their white brethren there has existed from time immemorial an almost human feud. The black ants will come and taste the treacle; but almost as soon they discover the hole of their white enemies. Instantly a detachment starts off, leaving the treacle and disappearing in the jungle. In the course of the day it returns, leading an army of black ants drawn out in a line many yards in length. The whole force enters the hole, and the work of extermination begins. The white ant is defenseless; in the course of an hour or so not one survives, and most of the black conquerors go home in triumph, each with a white ant in his mouth.

Happily for the hunters, snakes are neither numerous nor very venomous in Ceylon. Mr. Baker seldom saw any, except when he sat down to watch the gaunt adjutant—a species of crane—stalk through the marshes. With measured tread he steps among the rushes, plunging his huge bill into a hole, and bringing up an immense writhing snake; snap, snap, goes the bill, and half the snake is gone; snap, snap, again, and the other half is invisible; and grim Sir Adjutant stalks on as though nothing had happened.

Of all these vermin denizens of the jungle and the swamp the Cingalese fears none. He can even shoot an elephant, a leopard, or a bear, if he is not too close. But just before daybreak, when the devil-bird utters its long low note of pain on the tree-tops, and it swells and swells, and at last dies away upon the ear—then the Cingalese hides his head in his hands, and shudders in terror. For whoever sees the devil-bird must surely die. So implicit is the faith of the natives in this singular superstition, that when a British officer's servant—a Cingalese—happened one day to see one on a tree close to him, he went home and prepared calmly for death. He was so satisfied that he would die that he refused to eat, and in this way, sure enough, he soon put an end to his life. Fortunately for the Cingalese, the devil-bird is a species of owl which is seldom seen in the daytime.

There is a strange air of romance about the Cinnamon Isle, with its mighty ruins, and silent jungles, and rare hunting-grounds. Some day, perhaps, we may know it better. A day must come when a great trade will spring up on the southern coast of Asia and among the gorgeous islands of that wonderful Archipelago. Australia grows with prodigious strides. The Chinese oyster is slowly yielding to the knife. War is carrying its atonement—commerce—into the Persian Gulf, and up the Irawaddy. Even the volcanic isles are ripening to civilization, and liberal institutions are talked of for British India. Whenever these regions shall produce, and exchange in due proportion to their unparalleled natural advantages, Ceylon will become one of the great places of the earth. It must be the centre of their commercial world. Pointe des Galles was indicated long ago as the natural mart for Indian produce; the indication was unerring. In itself Ceylon lacks nothing but skilled labor. Newera Ellia proves its agricultural capacity; history the extent of its fertile plains. Gold is found there, too; and some Californians who have examined the beds of its streams quite concur with those archæologists who take it to have been the ancient Ophir. Does any one want a home in the Cinnamon Isle?