



Painted for OOTIS by Hermann Simon.

"THEY ARE BOTH DEAD." (P. 413.)

A LEOPARD HUNT IN CEYLON.

BY F. FITZROY DIXON.



AME of one sort or another is to be found throughout the Island of Ceylon. Naturally it is most abundant where there is little habitation or traffic; but excellent sport may often be obtained in districts where,

from the surrounding settlement, it would scarcely be expected.

The coffee plantations which have made Ceylon famous are situated in the central province, a mountainous region, more or less covered with a dense growth of forest. The best land has been cleared off here and there in blocks of from two to three hundred acres and planted up. In favorable localities many estates are side by side, or in close proximity, and form districts bearing distinctive names. The great enemy of the coffee tree is wind, which, when severe, will destroy the blossom or immature fruit in a very brief time. As a natural consequence planters avoid the higher and more exposed slopes of the mountains, and cultivate the lower lands, leaving often wide stretches of undisturbed jungle to crown each range. These patches and strips of jungle generally teem with small life. Jungle-fowl, spur-fowl, or partridges, pigeons and doves abound. Where cinchona is grown, the sambur, erroneously termed the elk, is apt to prove a source of much annoyance. It delights in browsing on the intensely bitter leaves, charged with the alkaloids of quinine, and partially destroys many a promising young field. The sambur is seldom come upon by day, for it feeds at night, and then retires to rest in some sequestered spot.

The wild pigs, too, forage under cover of darkness. Where cocoanut-oil cake has been used as a fertilizer they are attracted by the smell, and by rooting do much damage. They are very wary, and are rarely shot, although often enough run into with hounds and killed.

Where game is abundant the counterpoise of nature, as Darwin calls it, is not wanting, and the destructive element in Ceylon is the leopard, which establishing itself in some rocky cavern or impenetrable bit of scrub, devastates the jungle, and occasionally raids the neighboring cattle sheds. A leopard generally ravages over a wide extent of country, and herein lies its safety; it may be heard of at one place to-day, and perhaps a dozen miles away to-morrow. Moreover, the natural timidity and power of exaggeration of the coolie are such that stories of the presence of a leopard have always to be taken *cum grano salis*, and doubtless the general lack of faith in native yarns has aided many a prowler to escape.

The forests in some districts are broken into by the *patnas* or grass lands, always undulating and often extending for miles along the side of a mountain range. Very beautiful they are, too, the light tints of the herbage contrasting finely with the somber forest background. Every here and there a stream trickles down a ravine, while clumps and belts of timber complete the picture. Yet, despite their beauty, these *patnas* are seldom worth hunting over, for they afford little else than an occasional hare. Here and there in the vicinity of villages and paddy fields we find a small variety of deer, called in India the *muntjac*, or rib-faced deer, and in Ceylon, the paddy-field deer.

On the plantations in the vicinity of *patna* land it is customary to keep cattle for the sake of the manure. Each herd is driven out to pasture every morning by a lad whose duty it is also to look after the animals, bring them back at night, and inclose them in a shed.

From time to time a leopard carries off a calf, or strikes down a bullock, and owing to the difficulty of following it in the forests, invariably does so with impunity. Sometimes, however, it hangs around one locality too long for its safety, and by adopting certain haunts enables those who are looking for it to accomplish its destruction.

I recollect very well the trouble we had in a certain district, and the way we

brought the unwelcome visitors to bag. At the time I was living on an estate near an extensive *patna* upon which the cattle of the neighborhood grazed. One evening I was sitting in the veranda enjoying a pipe, when, happening to look across the valley. I saw our herd coming down the hillside in apparently great excitement, some bellowing and others racing as if in terror. The herd-lad was following without any attempt to quiet them. I was therefore not surprised when a little later he rushed up accompanied by half a dozen men all shouting: "*Pillee, therdaley, pillee!*" (Leopard, sir, leopard!)

The herd-lad had driven the cattle to pasture as usual and had remained with them all day. About five o'clock, as the sun was getting low, he counted them over preparatory to returning, and discovered that one was missing. Remembering that he had seen a yearling heifer grazing in a ravine some little distance off, he started in search. Seeing a huge boulder it struck him that he might use it as a point of observation, and accordingly he climbed upon it. Just as he was thinking of getting down again he heard right at his feet a sound that made his heart stop beating. The carcass of the missing heifer was in some long grass, and standing over it with glaring eyes and open, blood-dripping jaws was a magnificent leopard. The boy stood for a moment petrified with terror, then he slid down the rock and ran to the herd, which had become uneasy, evidently scenting something in the breeze. He drove his beasts homeward as quickly as possible, and after inclosing them in the cattle-yard, ran to me, spreading the news as he passed the coolies' lines.

It was too late to think of attempting anything that evening, for the short tropical twilight was fast waning, and I knew that by the time I could reach the spot the ravine would be plunged in obscurity.

Early the next morning I set out, accompanied by the herd-lad. From my knowledge of the habits of the leopard I was not hopeful of finding it, though it might possibly return to make a second meal of the carcass. As we approached the scene of the encounter we proceeded with great caution, carefully scanning every clump of bush or hollow that might cover the animal. We saw nothing,

and finally reached the spot where lay the bones of the heifer. I was surprised to find the carcass so thoroughly consumed, and was trying to account for it when I discovered by a pool of water the tracks of two leopards, one larger than the other.

It was clear then that on finishing their meal they had drunk at the pool and then retired to some well-concealed lair. They might be close at hand or half a dozen miles away. I was inclined to the latter opinion and after beating the surrounding country I returned to the estate, giving them up for the present.

For some time we heard nothing more of the leopards. Days and weeks passed and still they gave no sign, and we began to think that we had seen the last of them, until one day the district was startled by hearing that a neighboring planter and his wife had come upon both leopards in unpleasantly close proximity. One Sunday afternoon he suggested to his wife to take a stroll, and accordingly, accompanied by a favorite Maltese terrier, they started out, choosing for their walk a path leading to an elevated corner of the estate, partly inclosed with forest. They reached the spot and sat down on a log to enjoy the lovely view. Presently, as lengthening shadows warned them that it was time to return, the planter rose and lighted a cheroot. As he did so his wife, who had been watching the dog, which had crossed over to the other side of a little ravine, said: "Look at Gyp; what is the matter with her?" Turning, he saw that the dog was crouching by a stump and apparently in a state of abject terror. There came a rustling in the underbrush, and with a spring as quick as light a magnificent leopard bounded out of the cover and picked up the dog in its mouth. The great cat paused for a moment, looking around, switching its tail from side to side and growling in triumph. Then it trotted into the jungle. As it did so a second leopard suddenly appeared, looking larger and fiercer than the first, and catching sight of the spectators, followed its mate.

The planter lost no time in getting his wife home, and then gave warning to secure the cattle in case of an attack. During the night an uproar amongst the coolies' dogs indicated that something was afoot, and next morning a goat was

missing. The searchers found a few fleshless bones and the head.

Things began to get serious. Ladies in different parts of the district were so nervous that they kept their children at home. Here and there a dog or a goat would disappear, and yet so skillfully were the attacks made that we could never know where the leopards were. Several of us spent days vainly hunting for their lair, which we felt sure would be somewhere in the neighborhood.

The coffee district lay in an amphitheater-like valley, the higher slopes rising to a forest-clad ridge of great granite cliffs, broken here and there by gullies choked with masses of rock and thorny undergrowth.

One fine evening my friend Grey arrived at my bungalow full of excitement, saying that at last he had found out something definite. Some Cingalese villagers, searching for wild honey, had followed a ridge leading to the foot of the cliffs, and had discovered a black mass of bees suspended from a projecting rock which overhung what appeared to be a cave. Understanding their work well they moved quietly, for the *dambana*, the giant bee of Ceylon, can be easily driven from the comb if properly handled, but once aroused gives unquestionable evidence of stinging powers proportionate to its size. Whilst preparing a torch a slight noise attracted their attention, and looking up they beheld a leopard gazing at them, which presently bounded down the face of the cliff by a sort of natural pathway. The men were badly scared, and when a second leopard emerged they dropped torches, chatties and everything else and fled for their lives. They knew Grey well and told him of their adventure.

The natives agreed to pilot us, and we started next morning just as the sun was beginning to redden the tips of the mountains. Our route lay toward a mass of rock that rose like a pinnacle above the outline of a far-off ridge.

The wild animals of Ceylon make the mountain ridges their highway, and in the densest localities a track may invariably be found on a spur or backbone. This enables the sportsman to travel with comparative ease where he would otherwise have almost to hack his way with a knife. Knowing this we presently struck a ridge, and for several hours marched steadily, sometimes as-

ending, sometimes descending. Here we would clamber up a succession of granite slabs, slippery with the morning dew, and there we would lose the track and shoulder our way through the tangle of bamboo and *nilla*, both of which have a most provoking trick of twisting around one's ankles. At length we reached a ridgeback, the summit of the range, and, selecting a big flat rock, we sat down to regain our wind and enjoy a pipe. Our guides spoke as if the slaying of the leopards was a foregone conclusion, and assured us that they would lead us to the edge of the cliff, whence we could gaze into the mouth of the cave and shoot the beasts as they basked in the sun.

After a short rest we started again, following a deer-path in perfect silence. At last the jungle grew thinner, and we got a glimpse of sunshine in the distance. Our guides stopped and showed us the pinnacle of rock we had seen on starting. We were now close to the edge of the precipice, in the face of which we hoped to find the leopard's cave. We observed the greatest caution, communicating in low whispers or by signs. After a few minutes' consultation between the men we moved onward, and presently emerged from the dense undergrowth, which concealed the edge of the cliff, onto a large rock, which enabled us to see clear into space. In front of us the country fell away thousands of feet into a dim, misty blue horizon, and on looking to the right and left we discovered that we were on the edge of a mighty wall of granite.

Touching my elbow, my guide pointed to a sort of bay where the cliff ran back into the mountain. Retracing our steps for some distance, we proceeded in a direction parallel with the cliff, and then Grey and I, after agreeing upon signals, separated, each following a guide to the place which we were intended to occupy.

After much silent crawling I reached my post, an opening between two bowlders, where, screened by ferns and creepers, two men might lie abreast overlooking the precipice. Then I saw that I was gazing almost directly at the head of the little bay where, under an overhanging rock, was the opening to a cave, to which access was gained by a sloping seam in the face of the cliff. But there was no game in sight; the occupants were apparently away. I could

not help thinking what a sure thing we had of it, for I had a lying-down shot at fifty yards for anything that might appear; and Grey's hiding-place opposite brought him even nearer. Presently the waving of a branch near Grey's hide indicated that he and his man had got into position; then, after signaling back, we lay waiting. It was very exciting at first, for I fully expected to see something emerge from the cave; but after a couple of hours of fruitless watching the thing grew monotonous.

A band of Wandaroo monkeys hooted in the distance, and, as their watchfulness is proverbial, we knew that there was no leopard at hand. They came nearer and nearer, and in time appeared above the cliff. One seldom has the chance of observing these animals in their native state, but as we lay entirely concealed they were ignorant of our presence. It was evidently feeding time, though some seemed to prefer basking on the heated rocks to scrambling after lichens and berries. Two old men with huge white whiskers kept a sharp watch from the topmost branches of a couple of trees. The mothers with their babies, pretty little things covered with white hair, were feeding in complete security, whilst the unincumbered members of the troop ran about everywhere. We felt sure that sooner or later our hiding place would be discovered and that all our precautions were in vain, for the cry of alarm of one animal is often recognized by another of a different species. When any monkey seemed inclined to wander the sentinels uttered a deep "Hoo-oo-hoo" which gathered the band closely.

All at once one of the sentinels gave a peculiar cry, which had the effect of bringing the entire band around them. Then they listened in silence. The cry was repeated, and all bounded into the branches of the biggest trees near by. We thought we had been discovered, but when half a dozen of the patriarchs suddenly rushed down and looked over the edge of the rock, grimacing and barking at something below we knew that our patience was to be rewarded.

Creeping forward inch by inch I got to the extreme edge and peeped over, and as I did so the awful height of the precipice nearly caused me to utter a cry of terror. To my left was a crevice, where rocks and other debris formed a

rough means of ascent. Here, half concealed by kittool palms that had found foothold, was a cat-like form, standing motionless, gazing upward at the monkeys, evidently calculating the chances of a meal. I drew carefully back, for my head and shoulders must have been clearly outlined against the sky.

Getting my rifle well in front, I was ready to take advantage of the first fair chance. I could not help marveling at the ingenuity of the beast that had led it to secure so admirable a lair, for we might have hunted for months without ever finding it but for the chance that led the honey seekers in that direction. Probably the leopards had found the cave while following a troop of monkeys from the lower forest. I looked across to Grey's hiding place, and as a hand waved in front of the bushes I concluded he had seen the game.

The minutes passed slowly by, and I wondered if the beast would ever mount the crevice. Evidently the monkeys were attracting it, for they kept up their vociferations, dancing on the edge of the cliff and almost throwing themselves over in their excitement. I ventured to gaze once more down the precipice, and I saw that the leopard was creeping up slowly. There was nothing to do but to watch the mouth of the cave, and this I did with my rifle pointing straight at it, ready to get onto the yellow hide so soon as it appeared. There was a streak of light fur visible and the leopard sprang up the face of the cliff with gigantic bounds and was into the cave before we realized what had happened. So rapid were its movements that it was impossible, lying as we were, to cover it with any degree of certainty.

After a lapse of about a quarter of an hour it suddenly reappeared and stood at the entrance of the cave, gleaming like gold as the sunshine fell upon it, with the black shadow behind it. Now was our time, and almost simultaneously our rifles rang out. It gave a great bound and fell with the blood streaming from its neck and shoulder, then, true to its feline nature, it managed to get into the shadow of the cave out of sight.

We had done pretty well, but had not yet brought it to bag, so we remained quiet after reloading our rifles and waited for what was to follow.

The wounded animal suddenly set up a succession of screams such as we had

never heard before. The most horrible miaulings that ever cat uttered were nothing to this music. It was a signal to the mate. My guide chuckled and said that we should sleep on their skins. In a little while there came an answering cry from below, which was repeated twice, each time nearer, and then as we watched the mouth of the cave we saw the graceful, sinuous form bound up the face of the cliff, scarcely deigning to avail itself of the foothold of the crevice. It had heard the cry, and was ready to avenge its cause. It disappeared into the cave, and we watched for its reappearance.

The screechings and snarlings that went on inside showed us that the two animals were in a great state of excitement, and ready to do battle. The sun was getting low and we were anxious to focus matters, so Grey left his station and came over to me, and we took counsel. It was obvious that the animals would remain hidden until after dark when one, at least, would emerge and probably escape. One of the natives solved the problem by saying: "If the Mahathmeya would shoot into the beehive they would sting the leopards into coming forth!"

'Twas a happy thought and a bullet crashed into the black hanging mass of bees. In an instant the air about the comb was filled with an angry buzzing swarm, and in a few minutes the snarls in the cave redoubled and the two leopards appeared. As they did so we both fired, but as chance would have it aimed at the animal we had previously wounded. Before we could bring our second barrels to bear upon the other it was down the cliff like a bird and out of sight.

There lay our victim, dead this time, with its head hanging over the edge, the blood dripping slowly from its jaws onto the rocks below. The Cingalese were greatly delighted and jabbered eagerly. At last one of them said his companion would bring up the body. "How on earth do you intend to do that?" we asked, for although we had mentally decided to have it we had no idea how we were going to set about it.

"We can manage," they replied, and pulling their knives out of their waistclothes, disappeared into the jungle.

Grey and I sat down and ate what we had, and then lighted our pipes, waiting

for the next move of our guides. In a little while they appeared on the edge of the cliff over the cave, dragging some long creepers, known as jungle-ropes, from their length and strength. These they rapidly knotted together, until a sufficient length was got ready, and then making a wide loop one of them sat in it, prepared to descend while his companion lowered him down from above, taking a turn around a tree for greater security. We looked on in horror, for in an instant the man was swinging in midair, with hundreds of feet of space below him, but by the way he fended himself from the wall with a stick it was easy to see that he was an old hand at hunting rock-honey.

In a little while he was in front of the cave and, carefully avoiding the hive upon which by this time the bees had again congregated, he swung himself into the opening. It was with a feeling of relief that we saw him safely landed, for a jungle creeper is not the safest of supports.

After examining the dead leopard and calling out to us the effect of the shots we had fired, he turned round and walked into the cave, and in a few minutes came back holding in each hand a beautiful cub which he lifted up to our view. "They are both dead! Their throats were bitten by the mother," he shouted, kicking the prostrate form at his feet. And it was even so. Wounded to death herself, she had deliberately taken their lives.

When we realized what prizes we had lost by neglecting to search the cave before the parents returned, we were terribly disappointed. We hauled up the body of the dead animal, and then the guide, who brought up the cubs tied round his waist in his turban. The youngsters were like large kittens, and most beautifully fat and soft. The mother's skin was richly marked, and in admirable condition.

It was too late to think of returning home, and we wanted to get the other leopard, so our men led us to the hut they had erected before starting out after honey. Half an hour's scramble brought us to an opening in the face of the cliff, where amid trailing vines and magnificent tree-ferns a stream of water fell by a succession of stony terraces to the depths below. We managed to get down by clinging to the

vegetation, sliding and jumping, and at last reached the hut. In a few minutes the men had a little lamp burning and a fire lighted, and we made ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would admit of. A capital curry was prepared, and we soon went to sleep on a couple of skins spread on fresh cut boughs.

Toward morning we were awakened by one of the men who said that a sambar was calling in the valley below. The cliffs above us echoed back his hoarse challenge, and we felt sure that he was a mighty stag. The men said that they could lead us to the spot if we would start. We stumbled, and made a good deal more noise than we should have in our progress; but presently we struck a deer track, leading through the forest, and proceeding with great caution, found ourselves within a couple of hundred yards of where the stag was still at intervals bellowing.

The day was now dawning; and we were close to the edge of the jungle, and decided to wait fifteen minutes for better light.

At last we caught a glimpse of the *patna*; but the ground rose abruptly in front, cutting off the view. Grey crawled up to the summit of the ridge and peered over, to get, if possible, a sight of the stag. After one glance he came

back and whispered, "The other leopard is stalking the stag!"

In a few seconds we were sprawling side by side on the top of the little knoll, and what we saw was enough to make any one's heart beat. About eighty yards off stood a stag, and close by his consort was daintily browsing. Ever and again he would lift his head and utter his hoarse challenge. Near where he stood was a broken mass of rock, partly overgrown with bracken and a few tufts of coarse grass, and on it a crouching form was stealing nearer, foot by foot, to the unconscious deer. After a whispered "Are you ready?" we covered the spotted cat, and our rifles rang out together. Running clear of the smoke we found that on being hit the leopard had leaped a full twenty-five feet. The deer fled in terror. Our prize lay struggling in a clump of bracken; but knowing well the tenacity of life of all its tribe, we stood prepared for accident. It made ineffectual efforts to reach us; but one bullet had passed through the lungs, and the other had broken both shoulders, and in a little while it died. We returned to the hut, gladly helping to carry the beast. Later the coolies brought in the skins, which for many a day after adorned our respective bungalows.

DUCK SHOOTING IN A CITY.

BY HERMAN RAVE.

THESE are duck hunts and duck hunts. While you, my friend of leisure, may go down to the broad expanse of Chesapeake Bay, or to the smaller solitude of some inland lake, we of the counting-room shoot upon city waters—the broad highway that sweeps between Louisville and its Indiana neighbors—upon the dancing waters of the Ohio, with the sounds and sights of urban life about us.

It may be a morning in March, when swift wings cleave the air and wedge-shaped flights of birds go northward, or it may be in autumn, when the same travelers return, that the boom of guns, like a salute to the dawn, sounds along the shores of the triple city of the Falls.

It comes from the river and everybody knows it means ducks. They have come and settled upon the Ohio

to rest after long flight, and slowly they drift with the current past the cities and toward the rapids.

There are bluewings, as delicate as quail and not much bigger; sprigtails, butterballs, occasional aristocratic mallards, blacknecks, the provoking "dipper," sometimes a woodduck, and tough water-hens. All these come, but for some unknown reason there are more butterballs in the spring, and more mallards, blacknecks and water-hens in the fall. They are not in such numberless flights as haunt the famous bays and lakes, but the flocks are sufficiently strong to make sport that is tempting—different from that of the screen and decoy, and much more difficult. It is a hunt, not a slaughter. It does not mean a simple blazing away into crowded ranks of birds, deluded by