



W.C. Harris.

XXVIII. 1. FELIS LEOPARDUS: THE LEOPARD.
 2. FELIS JUBATA: THE HUNTING PARD.

PLATE XXVIII.

1. FELIS LEOPARDUS.—THE LEOPARD.

Tiger of the Cape Colonists.

GENERIC CHARACTER.—Adult male about two feet seven inches high at the shoulder, and seven feet six inches in extreme length. Claws retractile, chin, neck, breast, belly, and inside of extremities, mottled black and white. The rest varying in different specimens between yellow, tawny, fulvous, and reddish brown, irregularly marked with open black rings, *en form de roses*, which vary greatly in number, size, and appearance, in different sexes, and at different ages or seasons, and contract into full spots about the head, neck, and limbs.* Tail about two feet eight inches long, spotted and ringed with black. Ears round. Whiskers strong and white. Eyes yellow.

Female similar, but smaller. Monogamous or solitary. Inhabits thick coverts and rocky situations both within and without the Colony.

2. FELIS JUBATA.—THE HUNTING PARD.

Luiipaard of the Cape Colonists. *Nquane* of the Bechuana.

GENERIC CHARACTER.—Size of both sexes about that of a greyhound. Body slender; legs very long; claws semi-retractile. Belly and insides of extremities white; the rest pale yellow, studded with small round black spots, larger on the back and outside of the thighs. Hair of the upper part of the neck and withers, rather long, forming a small mane. A black stripe on the ears, and another from the corners of the eyes to the angle of the mouth. Tail annulated with black and white bars, and tipped with white.

Inhabits open rocky situations. Not very common.

* It is difficult to find any two individuals of this species which exactly resemble each other. The ground colour is subject to considerable variation, not only in the different sexes, but even in the same sex at different ages and at different times of the year. The spots are also found to vary in appearance and number, and the tail has seldom the colours arranged in the same way in any two specimens. The female as met with in South Africa, is commonly about a third smaller than the male, with the ground colour generally darker, at least upon the back and upper portions of the sides. The occurrence of such discrepancies may probably have given rise to the establishment of more species than actually exist in nature, and when the *Felis Leopardus*, *F. Pardus*, and *F. Pardus Antiquorum*, are compared together with attention, and the variations to which the first is known to be subject, are kept in view, it will probably be admitted that there are not three species, but one species. *Dr. Smith.*

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE LEOPARD, AND HUNTING PARD.

" My kingdom is the forest green,
'Tis strong and old and wide;
By the swift torrent's shelvy brink,
Or by the mountain's side.
The lion knows me in his path;
The spotted leopard hies
To seek the thicket's closest shade,
When my red arrow flies."

Song of the Mountaineer.

IN open defiance of Pliny, Buffon, Cuvier, and the whole fraternity of Natural Historians, whether ancient or modern, the Dutch Colonists of the Cape of Good Hope have set up for themselves a classification and nomenclature which, whilst it is certainly no improvement upon the old system, is in most instances sufficiently preposterous. The proud *Otis*, or Bustard, for instance, is made to represent a Peacock; they have dubbed the Hyena, a Wolf, and the subject of the annexed portrait, forsooth, a Tiger! I need hardly state that the "striped Bengal Royal" cat of the travelling menageries has no existence in Africa, but the Leopard, as well as the Cheeta or Hunting Pard, are generally distributed, nor do they differ in any respect, that I could discover, from their Asiatic brethren. Both species occur chiefly in mountainous districts, where they prey upon the Coney, or *rock rabbit* of the Dutch zoologists, upon Baboons, and such of the antelopine race as they are able to surprise. Common throughout the Colony, the Leopard is much dreaded by the farmers on account of the ravages he commits amid their sheep, and during the breeding season, also among the foals and calves.

" Fierce from his lair springs forth the speckled Pard,
Thirsting for blood, and eager to destroy ;"

and nightly may his low half-smothered growl be heard, as he prowls around the fold, whence, in spite of the baying troops of watch-dogs that are maintained for the protection of the flocks, he not unfrequently contrives to purloin mutton.

Viewed in a wild state, few animals can surpass the lurking Leopard in point of beauty; his brilliant orange and white skin, which shines like silk, being richly studded with open rosettes, sometimes of the most intense sable, at others disposed as if a cat had been walking over it with her paws tarred. Nor is he less distinguished for elegance and grace. His every motion easy and flexible in the highest degree, he bounds among the rocks and woods with an agility truly amazing; now stealing along the ground with the silence of a snake, now crouching with his fore paws extended, and his spotted head laid betwixt them, whilst his chequered tail twitches impatiently, and his pale gooseberry eyes glare mischievously upon his unsuspecting victim. But the nocturnal depredator is not unfrequently outwitted, and being ensnared in a cage constructed of stones and timber, upon the principle of the rat-trap, is sentenced without trial by Judge or Jury to be worried by every dog that the country round can contribute; for no Dutchman choosing to hazard an attack upon the intruder, when at large, unless he be backed by some dozen canine coadjutors, it is of course desirable to give these latter a foretaste of the animal's tactics. Accidents in the chase are frequent in those districts which abound most in this species, and during my short sojourn in the Colony, I heard of the occurrence of more than one. On our way across the Sneeuwbergen, we encountered a Hottentot, wearing a battered hat almost smothered in ostrich plumes, and riding as if for a wager against time. Inquiring as he bumped past with legs and arms going, whither he sped in so desperate a hurry, we were informed, "to Graaf Reiniet in order to fetch Doctor Krebbs to *myn jong baas*, whose *kop* has been nearly pulled off by *de Tiger!*" And we afterwards ascertained that the young boer in a clumsy attempt upon the life of "the spotted prowler of the wild," had in truth been so severely dealt with, that he eventually lost his own.

One Leopard only suffered at the hands of our party, and his demise, in a hole, being simultaneous with the discharge of the first rifle, I may be allowed to draw upon tradition for an anecdote better illustrative of the sport. "Two African farmers," writes Pringle, "returning from hunting the Hartebeest, happened to rouse a Leopard in a mountainous ravine on the frontier, and forthwith gave him chase. The animal endeavoured to effect his escape by clambering up a steep precipice, but being hotly pressed and wounded, presently turned upon his pursuers with the frantic ferocity peculiar to the species in such emergencies. Springing first on the man who had fired at him, he tore him from his horse to the ground, bit him through the shoulder, and severely lacerated his face with his claws. The other, observing the disastrous situation of his comrade,

leapt from his saddle, and essayed to shoot the brute through the head, but whether from trepidation and the fear of wounding his friend, or whether from the quick motions of the animal, he unfortunately contrived to miss his mark. Then came the tug of war. Abandoning his prostrate enemy, the enraged beast darted like lightning upon his second assailant, and ere the boor could stab him with his knife, had actually torn the scalp over his eyes. In this frightful position, the hunter grappled with his savage antagonist, and both struggling for the mastery, away they rolled together down a steep declivity. The whole was but the work of an instant, and ere the man who had been abandoned could start upon his feet or resume his weapon, the combatants were tumbling one over the other in their descent. Reloading his gun, he rushed forward to save the life of his companion, but it was too late. The Leopard had seized the wretched victim by the windpipe, and so fearfully mangled him, that death was inevitable — nor had his severely wounded comrade more than the melancholy satisfaction of completing the destruction of the feline foe, already exhausted with loss of blood from divers deep wounds inflicted by the knife of the expiring huntsman."

The only Hunting Pard seen during our expedition, was detected by my companion at the foot of the Cashan mountains in the very act of tearing out the reeking entrails of a Water-buck. This animal differs in no respect from the *Cheeta* so commonly trained in the East to hunt the black antelope of the plains; and although not very abundant, is found throughout the Amazooloo country. Moselekatse's state apron, entirely composed of tails of the *Felinæ*, exhibited a large proportion borrowed from the 'Nquane, while the skins sent by the hands of 'Um Nombate together with other costly gifts from his illustrious Master, belonged also to this species, and were crowded with round black dots in place of open rosettes. Although the air and manner of the *Jubata* are unquestionably those of the cat, it doubtless forms the link with the canine group. Slender and elastic in build, and high on its attenuated legs, it presents the fine drawn figure of the greyhound, wearing a feline head and tail, the latter appendage being however extremely bushy towards the extremity. The claws are semi-retractile only, and although the wiry limbs are fitted for the strong muscular exertion required by the miraculous vigour and velocity of the animal's bounds, which impart a lightning-like speed that can laugh at the fleetest antelope, and for a few hundred yards, far exceeds that of the swiftest race horse, they are yet altogether deficient in that remarkable weight and substance which render so formidable a pat even, from the paw of the true Leopard. Both these species are the deadly enemies of the pig-faced Baboon,* large colonies of which people the rugged regions of Southern Africa. Great, hairy, athletic villains, forming the outposts of some mountain garrison, often advanced towards our party with an inquisitive look, and deliberately seated themselves on the rocks above us, as if debating over the propriety of what they were evidently pleased to consider a trespass upon their legitimate domain. Their inhospitable treatment obliging us on one occasion to make an example for public edification, we answered the hoarse challenge of an insolent detachment, with two rifle balls. Numbers assembled round the spot where the first had struck, scraping off the lead with their finger nails, and analyzing it with ludicrous gestures and grimace. The second missive happened however to upset one of their elders, an enormous 'man' as the Hottentots termed him, fully the size of a Newfoundland dog, who was strutting about erect, laying down the law upon the abstruse science of projectiles — and who, to judge from his venerable appearance, toothless gums, and white whiskers, must have been at least a great grandsire. This national calamity did not fail to cause incredible consternation, and there ensued many affecting domestic scenes, which made us almost question the nature of the act we had committed. With prodigious whoops and howlings, off trooped the party in all directions — those of the 'vrouws' that happened to be mammas, snatching up their lovely babes, fondly pressing them to their maternal bosoms with an impulse and action perfectly human, and bearing them in their arms beyond the reach of danger.

In point of personal attractions, the pig-faced Baboon, odious and disgusting though he be, has, if any thing, perhaps rather the advantage of the genuine Bushman, who most decidedly forms the connecting link with *Homo sapiens*, but in the scale of creation is barely one grade removed from "the beasts that perish." Meagre, bow-legged, and ill-made,

"Satyris præter figuram, nihil moris humani,"

the stature of these wild aborigines rarely exceeds four feet. High cheek bones, bleary eyes, crisp and coarse wool disposed over the head in detached tufts, together with prominences of fat, jutting out in parts of the body where they prove the least ornamental, render the pigmies sufficiently hideous; nor do they spare either pains or filth to perfect the disgusting exterior with which Dame Nature has invested them. Driven by the gradual encroachments of the European Colonists to seek an asylum in the pathless desert, they subsist precariously from day to day upon bulbous roots, reptiles, and the larvæ of ants, abiding chiefly in holes and crannies,

"Where flock nocturnal bats, and birds obscene."

Unblest among the nations of the earth,—heedless of futurity, and forgetful of the past, without either laws, arts, or religion, only a faint glimmering ray of instinct guides their benighted path; whilst possessed of neither flocks nor herds, and unacquainted with agriculture, the most wealthy of the wandering outcasts can boast of no property beyond his rude weapons, and his starving dog—his hand being raised against every man, as is every man's hand against him,

* *Cynocephalus Porcarius*.

The traveller might almost pass from end to end of a country infested by these troglodytic imps, without even suspecting that it was inhabited, were it not for occasional serious depredations committed upon his property. Although the men could sometimes be perceived scampering like so many Tom Thumbs towards their mountain fastnesses, or warily reconnoitring our cavalcade from some craggy summit, such is their general distrust of visitors, and of a troop of horsemen in the plain more especially, that they could seldom be induced to hazard an interview. During the night, their watchfires often burned brightly on the surrounding hills, and it was no uncommon event to come upon a nest of women encamped near some stagnant pool. The gipsies usually approached with great familiarity, patting their shrivelled stomachs in token of their palpable emptiness, and importuning for tobacco, which luxury was invariably doled out to them by inch. But it was written on the page of our destiny that our intercourse with these "daughters of the desert" should bring upon us foul disaster. Almost within sight of the Colonial hills, we halted one evening during our return pilgrimage, in the midst of a wide plain, whence arose an isolated tumulus in the figure of an Egyptian pyramid. Among some bluff rocks about its base, a knot of the witches held their orgies, and scarcely were the teams unyoked, before we were waited upon by a nymph whose foot measured barely four inches in length, and whose native charms, enhanced by copious unguents of red clay and fat, completely turned the heads of the Hottentots, that of the gallant Andries in particular. This Cinderella, who was followed by five wrinkled hags bringing fuel and wild roots for barter, gave us to understand in the mellifluous Dutch tongue, of which she was perfect mistress, that she had recently absconded from a farmer residing in the Sneeuwbergen, whose slave she had been from infancy; and after receiving a suitable bribe of tobacco, she obligingly directed us to a dirty pool at some distance, whither the thirsty oxen were immediately driven to water. The unfortunate animals, having fasted the preceding day and night, were then left to graze in a verdant hollow, whence it did not appear probable that they would stray; but about midnight, the roar of a lion being followed by a general rush towards the waggons, Andries, who stood next on the roster for duty, was appointed to keep watch. Spent with fatigue, and possessing withal a most gentlemanly abhorrence of anything like trouble, the worthy did not long preserve his vigil, and as a natural consequence of his drowsiness, at break of day not an ox was to be seen. This being an event of very common occurrence, created small uneasiness, nor would it in all probability have booted much, had the culprit, in lieu of dallying with the pretty Bushgirl, atoned for his past misdeeds by a suitable display of activity. But although the syren soon contrived to gull him with the assurance that she had seen the missing cattle hard by only a few minutes before, all that day, and a part of the next, were passed in a state of feverish anxiety, and in abortive attempts to recover the absentees—some one of the many of our scouts who had been dispatched on the trail, dropping in occasionally with a blank face, and the information of his having also failed. At last it was ascertained that the whole drove had gone off at a gallop several miles towards some distant hills, and a conviction that they must have been chased either by lions or Bushmen, imparted to our situation an aspect so lowering, that I determined at once to proceed in person to the rescue. Accompanied by Piet, and provided with rations for two days, I had cantered less than half way towards the hills, when Andries and Cobus, who had been left to carry on the tracks, were descried plying the lash, and approaching at speed, with the dismal tidings that our herd was in the custody of a troop of Bushmen occupying the summit of the nearest eminence, whence one of the pigmies in broken Dutch had challenged the gallant equestrians to do them battle. Cobus, who the morning before, when he dreamed not of the real state of affairs, had ridden forth gasconading of his prowess in arms, now repeated several times emphatically that the contemptible spokesman had actually defied him in terms derogating from his valour. "Here," said he, "here stand your *oxes*; come up if you're a man, come! take them, ye poltroons, an ye dare!" Yet although mounted, and abundantly equipped with ammunition, these hulking white-livered villains did not blush to acknowledge that their personal fears had induced them to decline the invitation;

"But to avoid the foe's pursuit,
With spurring put their cattle to 't,
And till all four were out of wind,
And danger too, ne'er looked behind."

Neither was it now possible to persuade them to turn back with me; the enemy, they averred, being so exceedingly numerous, and ensconced in so strong a position, that nothing could be attempted without a much larger force. "Neen," quoth Cobus, urging on his steed in the direction of our camp, "neen, ik vil niet. Ik is for de Boschmans bung."*

Here then, like sailors who have foundered upon a rock when within sight of their destined haven, were we, after weathering many a storm, and safely accomplishing the most hazardous portion of our journey, left at last a wreck in the desert. The vindictive and improvident character of the *Troglodytes*, aptly surnamed "the ox-eaters," rendered it but too probable that the whole of our unfortunate beasts had already been sacrificed to their malice, and to their ogre-like appetites, but the day was at all events too far spent to admit of our disturbing their revels before dark, and the night being moonless, it was necessary that our attack should be delayed until the following morning. Nor did it appear unlikely that a party of the marauders might be lurking in the hill, ready to fall upon the waggons during the anticipated absence of the owners; for the hateful squaws, with the flirt at their head, had deserted their abode late the preceding day—a filthy area, fortified by masses of rock heaped together by the hand of nature, and overgrown with wild olives, being now inhabited by

* Afraid.

none save meagre curs, which had been left by the vindictive sprites, to guard from the assaults of vultures the garbage and putrid skins with which the trees were festooned. After much deliberation, therefore, it was resolved to leave Claas and Frederick, two perfect old women, who confessed their inability to fight, together with the two domestics, whose black beards, to say nothing of the broken muskets with which they were armed, were calculated to instil terror into the stoutest heart—starting ourselves with the other five Hottentots in the dead of night, in order, if possible, to avoid creating suspicion of our departure. All the preliminaries of a Bushman hunt thus skilfully arranged, the best horses were selected and fastened to the waggons, and one hundred rounds of ball cartridge having been served out to each of the little band, we retired to rest, leaving the chronometer in charge of Cœur de Lion, with instructions to observe his wonted vigilance, and keeping both his eyes steadily fixed upon the hands, not fail to arouse us when they pointed at the hour of twelve.

I was however still broad awake, conjecturing the success of our projected *Commando*, when the watchful valet thrust his well-furnished chin under the canvas curtain of the waggon, and in a tremulous voice proclaimed that it was high time to be up and doing. With the design of inspiring chivalrous sentiments, a dram of ardent spirits was forthwith issued to each Hottentot knight-errant, and not a syllable having been spoken above a whisper, the skeleton steeds were silently caparisoned, and we commenced our stealthy march towards the enemy's position,

"Most mighty hunters, for our prey was man."

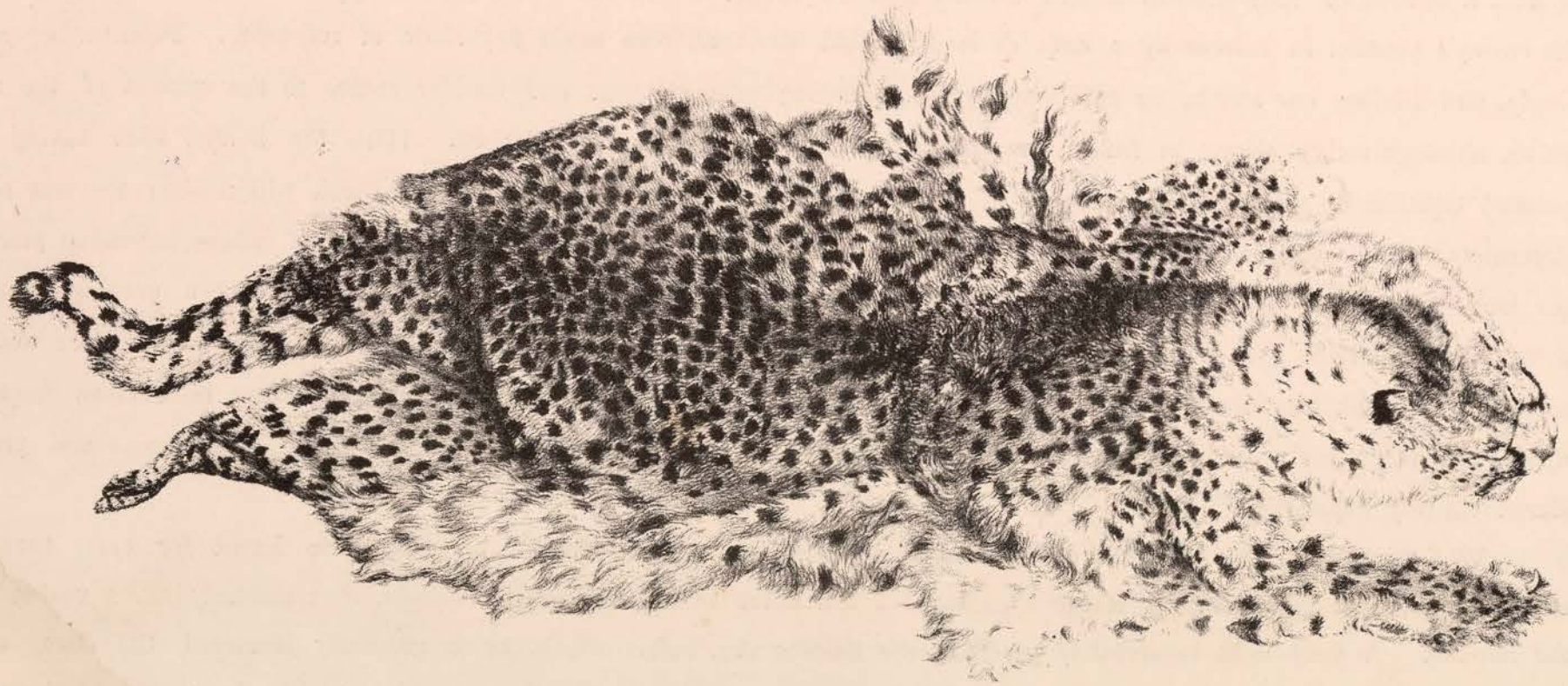
The night was cold and clear, and withal gloriously starlight: and it was in truth a goodly sight to behold the dusky band of gay cavaliers, girded every one about with his furniture of war, and carrying a heavy carbine on his shoulder, pricking jauntily over the plain. The distance of the Bushman castle being not less than eighteen miles, it was requisite, in order to arrive in proper time, that we should move on as briskly as possible. Ever and anon, whilst we cantered blindly along, in momentary apprehensions of losing each other, some one of the party was to be seen floundering among the *meerkat* burrows by which the sandy soil was completely undermined. Herds of timid Springboks, upon whose nocturnal repose we had unceremoniously obtruded, bounded panic-stricken across our path; and spectral Gnoos, galloping inquisitively up at intervals, stood within pistol shot, whisking their snowy tails, and bellowing defiance. After three hours' journeying we arrived on the bank of a narrow stream, completely choked with high bulrushes and tangled sedge; shortly after forcing our way through which abode of lions, not without incredible difficulty and many casualties, we descried the Lilliputian fortress towering before us in dim perspective. There was yet no glimmering of dawn, but the whoop of the disappointed Hyena returning to his lair, mingled with the waning cry of the Jackal, assuring us that the night was nearly spent, we halted for a few minutes to hold a council of war, whereat it was decided that we should ascend the hill from the opposite side, and having carried the enemy's position in reverse by a *coup de main*, should shoot all who made any show of resistance. Dismounting accordingly, and leading our steeds, we noiselessly groped our way among thorns and boulder stones to the summit of the ridge, which, although rather abrupt in front, was spread out behind into easy undulations. Here the horses, after having been fastened together by their bridles, were left in charge of Cobus, whose heart again began to sink within him; the rest of the Hottentots, with ourselves, creeping on all fours towards the table land occupied by the enemy, of whose increasing proximity our noses began now to apprise us. Piet, who was in the van, presently made a warning sign, when peeping cautiously with uncovered heads over a natural parapet, we could perceive fires burning about two hundred yards in advance; and thus securely ambushed, scarcely daring even to breathe, we awaited the approach of dawn with a degree of nervous impatience which will be correctly estimated by those who reflect, that upon its successful issue the salvation of our waggons and property almost entirely depended.

Whilst still watching the cold darkness of night, which seemed as though it would have lasted for ever, the bright morning star, that joyous herald whose appearance I had never hailed with greater delight, shot suddenly like a rocket above the horizon. A faint light immediately pervaded the Eastern sky, before which, as it gradually increased, the stars, already winking as if drowsy with their long vigil, fast faded away, though the earth still continued in night. Imperceptibly almost, this light had presently given place to a ruddy tint, which speedily extended itself over the whole vault of heaven; but although the outline of objects in the extreme distance could now be indistinctly traced in sombre brown, against the background of a sky cloudless to the zenith, those immediately about us were yet shrouded in darkness. Around, all was silent as the tomb, not a zephyr disturbing the death-like stillness that was reigning. As objects became gradually plainer, the shadowy forms of several conical reed huts could be distinguished; and lastly by a still less dubious light, the prostrate carcasses of many of our pet oxen became visible, a surfeited old vulture, the genius of desolation, mounting sentry over them. Alas! it was then even as we had feared; but if indeed we were irretrievably ruined, it was some consolation to know that the moment for taking vengeance had arrived. Every rifle was noiselessly cocked, and a finger flew to every trigger, as with palpitating hearts and wary tread we stole over the parapet towards the wretched wigwams. Woe betided that luckless wight who had there been found sleeping—he would never have awoke again! But although smouldering fires were smoking in various directions, every cabin proved to be deserted; and after visiting each in succession, and diligently searching every nook and cranny without being able to discover a solitary human being, we turned for a moment to contemplate the tragic scene before us. Nineteen of our gallant teams, swollen almost to bursting from the operation of a subtle poison, and disfigured by many a wanton wound, lay stretched in the wild enclosure, from which arose the most sickening of savage odours. Lean dogs,

"Gorging and growling o'er carcass and limb,"

held their carnival over the half-devoured dead, but were far too busy even to bark at our intrusion; whilst torpid vultures distended to such a size that they could with difficulty hop out of our way, were perched like harpies upon the surrounding rocks.

It was by this time broad daylight. The blue mountain peaks to the southward arose like islands above the sea of mist which floated over the intervening valley, and as the sun's genial influence gradually raised the white veil, were each converted into an altar whence a cloud of incense ascended towards heaven. To our delight a few of the oxen being now perceived standing in a cleugh at the foot of the hill, a party was immediately detached to take possession of them. Seventeen drooping wretches, with glazed eyes and fallen crests, were here huddled together, some shivering in the last agonies of death, and others with staring coats barely able to rise. In addition to sundry wounds which had been inflicted by our merciless and malicious foes whilst urging them across the plain, the unfortunate animals had recently received many cold-blooded gashes, bestowed apparently with the design of rendering them unserviceable to ourselves. Maddened with rage at the heart-rending prospect before us, again and again did we search every chink and rifted den, and unweariedly did we cast about upon the hard soil for the trail of the marauders. "Grim satyr-faced baboons" railed hoarsely at us from their rocky clefts, and to which side soever we turned, the slope of the hill was strewn with mouldering human bones; but after the closest scrutiny, no object could be discovered upon which we might wreak our vengeance. A Rheebok, disturbed by our matin approach, had unfortunately bounded through the encampment, and given the alarm to the "dwellers with owls and bats," who, though doubtless spectators of all that we were doing, had effectually concealed themselves from view; and after the strictest scrutiny, nine tracks only could be discovered. Of these six belonged to females, and one was that of our bewitching acquaintance! Barely four inches in length, but yet fully developed, there could be no mistaking *her* footmark; and whilst not a doubt now remained that Cinderella and her elfin colleagues had from our very first arrival been aiding and abetting the "pirates of the desert" to our ruin, it became equally evident that our doughty followers must have fled—not from the overwhelming host which their heated imaginations had conjured into existence, but from the empty challenge of a woman!



Skin of the African Hunting Pard as preserved by Capt. Harris.