

SILHOUETTES

CAPTAIN THEODORE THARP AND
HIS CLEVER WORK.



THE MARCHIONESS OF LONDON-
DERRY.



THE DUCHESS OF MONTROSE.

SILHOUETTE PORTRAITS BY CAPTAIN THARP.

It is with genuine pleasure that we present these beautiful specimens of the silhouette art in our pages this week.

Captain Tharp, whom we may without flattery call the silhouette artist of the day, if not the finest silhouette artist in the world, as described elsewhere, is a truly versatile genius with scissors and paper. With perfect facility and in an incredibly short space of time he is able to turn out the most wonderful groups and pictures, each differing as widely from the other as day from night, and affording proof of wealth and imagination.

For accuracy of form and delicacy of treatment these productions excel anything in the way of silhouette work that we have ever seen. His method is simplicity itself. He cuts out his animals and landscapes with a pair of fine scissors (of which we give a photograph) or as often as not with ordinary scissors, without the help of any drawing whatever, and each group or scene form one piece of black paper, to which not so much as a blade of grass is ever added, nor anything subtracted from the original design to improve it. People who have seen the reproductions of some of his most elaborate silhouettes are naturally sceptical of such extraordinary achievements being possible by such means. Indeed, openly expressed doubts have come to the knowledge of our silhouette artist, who here issues a challenge to the public at large that a select committee of the sceptical shall appoint a place of meeting and watch him while he accomplishes the task of cutting out some intricate jungle scene, or what-not, in the simple way he prides himself upon doing.

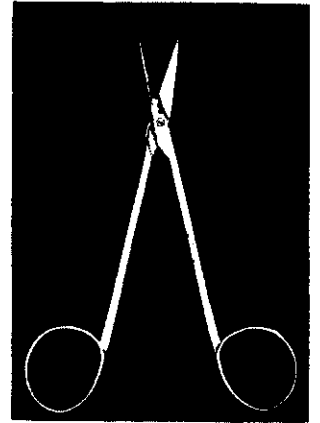
As a matter of fact, Captain Tharp's skill is entirely confined to his scissors; he is no draughtsman, and would only spoil his silhouette if he attempted to invoke the aid of pen or pencil. Ruskin, who, some years ago, had some of his silhouette work shown to him, himself expressed a certain scepticism, and declared he could not understand how

anybody possessed or such a correct eye for form and composition should not be an expert artist with pen, brush, or pencil. He considered Captain Tharp to be a fine sculptor thrown away by not having cultivated that branch of art. The question may arise in the minds of some as to how he has acquired his intimate knowledge of animal form as evinced in all his pictures. The answer is, through studying from life, and having a retentive memory which enables him to keep stored up in his mind all that he has seen in field, forest and jun-

creatures in their various attitudes and the perspective of their horns at different angles. He had the great advantage when a child in the nursery of being able to watch these animals day after day in his grandfather's deer-park. Nothing delighted him more than to come suddenly across the herds and see them facing him with inquisitive looks, when he would take mental notes, and on returning to the house attempt to cut them out of paper in all their different attitudes and positions—foresbortened, grazing, running, or lying down. His childish efforts with clumsy nursery scissors and old newspapers were not appreciated by his nurses, who probably only smacked him for wasting paper. But some of these crude efforts were rescued by his father, who saw the germs of genius in the boy's work, and kept them for comparison in after years with the finished silhouette productions of mature experience. Captain Tharp enjoys another great advantage in having served several years in India, when he was able to study jungle life from personal observation instead of from books. There, with his own eyes, he could see the denizens of the great Terai—the gerow, the sambur, the barasing, the cheetah, the karkur, and dozens of other species of his beloved deer, the delight of his heart; also the bears of the Lolab Valley in Kashmir, the ibex, markhor, ovis ammon of the lofty Himalayan ranges, and a host of other wild creatures wherewith to stock his memory.

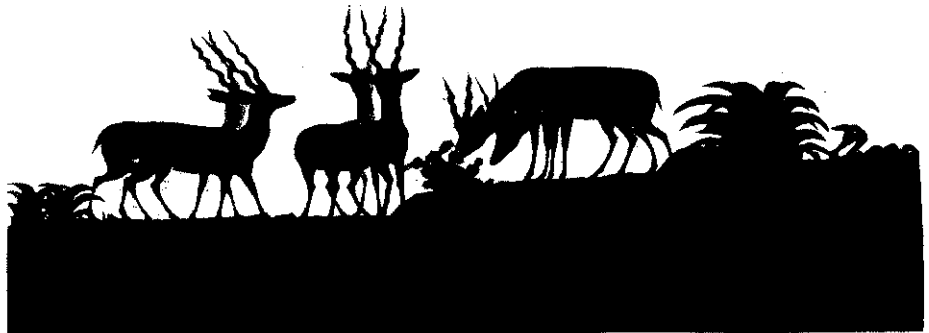
It is not given to every officer serving in India to have such opportunities as fell to Captain Tharp's share of studying big game from life and sport in its different branches. The result of such experience is amply shown in the extremely fruitful silhouette scenes which he is now giving to the public through the medium of various illustrated magazines and sporting papers. The more difficult the subjects the more he revels in doing them; complicated scenes, such as pig-sticking, tiger-shooting, cheetah-hunting, all of which, and many other forms of sport he has himself enjoyed out there, are child's-play to his nimble

that Captain Tharp stands unrivalled in the field. The art of the silhouette differs vastly from the art of drawing or painting. In the latter pictures can be worked out by elaborate and laborious means and touched up and improved to the highest degree, whereas the silhouette is just cut out straight ahead on the impulse of genius, so to say, and as the scissors cut, so must the lines



SCISSORS USED BY CAPTAIN THARP FOR CUTTING SILHOUETTES.

remain. There can be no rubbing out and altering afterwards to satisfy the artist's caprices. Before beginning his work he must have a clear image in his mind's eye of what he purposes producing. He cannot add to and embellish his work as he goes along. He must begin with a fixed purpose and adhere to that purpose. When the piece of paper is once cut off it is done with; it cannot be replaced if it turns out that the silhouette artist has made a mistake. All he can do is to reject the work and



THE SHADOWS OF A SHADOW. This silhouette is slightly raised from its white background, being separated by a strip of cardboard along the base. The silhouette itself thus casts a shadow.

gl. He never uses a model, and never copies from a picture, except in the case of historical portraits. From his boyhood he has ever been a keen observer of animal life, especially of deer, which he glories in delineating with his marvellous scissors, making light of the difficult task of portraying the graceful

scissors. And for delicate cutting, look, for instance, at that tropical branch teeming with animal life, monkeys, birds, squirrels, snakes, and imagine the original unmounted as it was brought to us, and laid across the palm of your hand, looking like very fine lace-work, the same with the fox and ducks, also brought to us unmounted. If the still sceptical desire to be relieved of their scepticism, these specimens of really marvellous silhouette cutting can be seen any day at our office to prove the genuineness of the work. Nor is Captain Tharp less expert in cutting in the old-fashioned silhouette likeness of the eighteenth century, than he is in delineating animals. By simply studying a profile (especially a lovely woman's) for a few moments he can cut it afterwards from memory and produce a good likeness. And in the faithful portrayal of the human form divine, whether on horseback or on foot, his graceful scenes from the hunting-field, the skating-rink, or the ballroom are not to be excelled.

It is a rare and extraordinary gift indeed that of the true silhouette artist, who adopts the simple means we have explained of achieving his results. In this respect we have no hesitation in saying

start again. But Captain Tharp never finds himself in this position. He never makes a mistake in his unerring scissors, never a false cut, nor by accident snips off a leg or an antler, or even a blade of grass. His perfect accuracy and artistic grip of his subject protects him against failure. In this he shows that he is a far more ready artist than the wielder of the brush or pencil, who can rub out and alter and touch up as he chooses.

Given first the extraordinary talent, which can never be acquired by any amount of practice, three qualities are essential to becoming an expert silhouette artist: a correct eye for form, a singularly delicate touch, and a steady hand. With out these qualifications no man living could achieve the marvellous results which may be seen in these reproductions, and yet the beautiful little pictures given here are nothing to what Captain Tharp is capable of accomplishing. For many years he allowed this gift to lie fallow, and it was only by a pure accident that he took to silhouette again at the beginning of last December. He was doing one night, when his hostess, a valued friend, remarked to him, playfully, "Captain



A REALISTIC SCENE.