

body as soon as ever he should come, which they firmly expected he would, to displace the line with his breast. But the lion which came in the day time before it was yet dark, and probably had some suspicions with respect to the line, struck it away with his foot; and without betraying the least fear in consequence of the reports made by the loaded pieces, went on steadily and careless of every thing, and devoured the prey it had left untouched before.

M. Buffon (tom. ix. p. 7.) tells us, on the authority of Marmol and Thevenot, that the lions, which in the more cultivated and inhabited parts of Barbary and India, are used to experience man's superiority, sometimes suffer themselves to be intimidated with a few strokes of a stick (and that even by women and children) from carrying off their prey. This accords with several accounts that I have heard at the Cape, of slaves who had had courage enough, with a knife or some other weapon still more insignificant, to defend their master's cattle, which had been attacked in the dark by a lion.

It is singular that the lion, which, according to many, always kills his prey immediately if it belongs to the brute creation, is reported frequently, although provoked, to content himself with merely wounding the human species; or at least to wait some time before he gives the fatal blow to the unhappy victim he has got under him. A farmer, who the year before had the misfortune to be a spectator of a lion's seizing two of his oxen, at the very instant he had taken them out of the waggon, told me, that they immediately fell down dead upon the spot close to each other; though, upon examining the carcasses afterwards, it appeared that their backs only had been broken. In several places through which I passed, they mentioned to me by name a father and his two sons, who were said to be still living; and who being on foot near a river on their estate in search of a lion, this latter had rushed out upon them, and thrown one of them under his feet: the two others, however, had time enough to shoot the lion dead on the spot, which had lain almost across the youth so nearly and dearly related to them, without having done him any particular hurt.

I myself saw, near the upper part of Duyven-hoek rivier, an elderly Hottentot, who at that time (his wounds being still open) bore under one eye and underneath his cheek, bone the ghastly marks of the bite of a lion, which did not think it worth his while to give him any other chastisement for having, together with his master (whom I also knew) and several other

Christians, hunted him with great intrepidity, though without success. The conversation ran every where in this part of the country upon one Bots, a farmer and captain in the militia, who had lain for some time under a lion, and had received several bruises from the beast, having been at the same time a good deal bitten by him in one arm, as a token to remember him by; but, upon the whole, had, in a manner, had his life given him by this noble animal. The man was said then to be living in the district of Artaquas-kloof.

I do not rightly know how to account for this merciful disposition towards mankind. Does it proceed from the lion's greater respect and veneration for man, as being equal to, or even a mightier tyrant than himself among the animal creation? or is it merely from the same caprice, which has sometimes induced him not only to spare the lives of men or brute creatures who have been given up to him for prey, but even to caress them, and treat them with the greatest kindness? Whims and freaks of this kind, have, perhaps, in a great measure, acquired the lion the reputation it has for generosity; but I cannot allow this specious name, fixed only to virtue, to be lavished upon a wild beast. Slaves, indeed, and wretches of servile minds, are wont with this attribute to flatter their greatest tyrant; but with what shew of reason can this attribute be bestowed upon the most powerful tyrant among quadrupeds, because it does not exercise an equal degree of cruelty upon all occasions?

That the lion does not, like the wolf, tiger, and some other beasts of prey, kill a great deal of game or cattle at one time, perhaps, proceeds from this, that while he is employed in attacking one or two of them, the remainder fly farther than it accords with the natural indolence of this beast to follow them. If this be called generosity, a cat may be styled generous with respect to the rats; as I have seen this creature in the fields among a great number of the latter, where she could have made a great havoc at once, seize on a single one only, and run off with it. The lion and the cat, likewise, very much resemble each other, in partly sleeping out, and partly passing away in a quiet inactive state a great part of their time, in which hunger does not urge them to go in quest of their prey.

From what I have already related, and am farther about to mention, we may conclude, that it is not in magnanimity, as many will have it to be, but in an indolent and cowardly disposition, blended with a certain degree of pride, that the general character of the lion consists: and that