



THE GRIZZLY BEAR.

The grizzly bear is the most formidable, and ferocious animal in California, and yet, with all his ferocity of disposition, rarely attacks a man unless surprised or molested. He never lies in wait for his victim. If the hunter invades his retreat or disputes his path he will fight, otherwise contents himself, with the immunity which he finds in the wilderness of his home and the savage grandeur of his nature. It is never safe to attack him with one rifle; for, if you fail to hit him in the vital part, he is on you in the twinkling of an eye. Your only possibility of escape is up a near tree, too slender for his giant grasp: and then there is something extremely awkward in being on the top of a tree with such a savage monster at the foot. How long he will remain there you cannot tell; it may be a day, and it may be a week. Your antagonist is too shrewd to hand you up your rifle or let you come down to get it. You are his prisoner, more safely lodged than in a dungeon, and he will set you at liberty when it suits him. He sleeps not himself at his post; day and night his great flashing eyes are fastened upon you. The lyre of Orpheus may have lulled to sleep the sentinel of Hades, but its magic tones have never charmed to slumber the sentinel of the California forest. The full grown California bear measures from eight to ten feet in length, and four or five in girth. His strength is tremendous,

his embrace death. Had the priest of Apollo fallen into his folds, he would have perished without any of those protracted agonies which the sympathetic muse has wailed round the world. Nature has thrown over him a coat of mail, soft indeed, but impervious to the storm and the arrow of the Indian. The fur, which is of a dark brown colour, is nearly a span long, and when the animal is enraged, each particular hair stands on an end. His food in the summer is chiefly berries, but he will now and then, on some of his feast days, slaughter a bullock. In winter he lives on acorns, which abound in these forests. He is an excellent climber, and will ascend a large oak with the rapidity of a tar up the shrouds of his ship. In procuring his acorns, when on the tree, he does not manifest his usual cunning. Instead of thrashing them down like the Indian, he selects a well-stocked limb, throws himself upon its extremity, and there hangs swinging and jerking till the limb gives way and down they come, branch, acorns, and bear together. On these acorns he becomes extremely fat, yielding ten or fifteen gallons of oil, which is said to be sufficiently pungent, nutritive as a tonic to tuff a statue's marble head. The she bear has one peculiarity that must puzzle even the philosophical inquirer. As soon as she discovers herself with young, she ceases to roam the forest, and modestly retires from the presence of others to some secluded grotto. There she remains, while her male companion, with a consideration that does honour to his sex, brings her food. She reappears at length with her two cubs, and woe to the luckless wight who should attempt to injure or molest them. They are guarded by an affection and fero-