

T H E

Nova-Scotia Magazine,

FOR AUGUST, 1790.

THE NATURAL HISTORY OF LIONS.

[From Dr. Sparrman's Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope.]

IT had not been dark two hours, before we heard the roaring of lions, which at times appeared to be pretty near us. This was the first time that I had heard this kind of music, and, as there were several performers, it might be properly called a concerto of lions. They continued roaring the whole night, whence my guide concluded, that they had assembled on the plains in order to copulate, and carry on their amours, by fighting and attacking each other after the manner of cats.

To describe the roaring of the lion as nearly as I can, I must inform the reader that it consisted in a hoarse inarticulate sound, which at the same time seemed to have a hollowness in it, something like that proceeding from a speaking trumpet. The sound is between that of a German u and an o, being drawn to a great length, and appearing as if it came from out of the earth; at the same time that, after listening with the greatest attention, I could not exactly hear from what quarter it came. The sound of the lion's voice does not bear the least resemblance to thunder, as M. de Buffon, tom. ix. p. 22. from the Voyage of Boullaye le Gouz, affirms it does. In fact, it appeared to me to be neither peculiarly piercing nor tremendous; yet, from its slow prolonged note, joined with nocturnal darkness, and the terrible idea one is apt to form to one's self of this animal, it made one shudder, even in such places as I had an opportunity of hearing it in with more satisfaction, and without having the least occasion for fear. We could plainly perceive by

our animals, when the lions, whether they roared or not, were reconnoitring us at a small distance. For in that case the hounds did not dare to bark in the least, but crept quite close to the Hottentots; and our oxen and horses sighed deeply, frequently hanging back, and pulling slowly with all their might at the strong straps with which they were tied up to the waggon. They likewise laid themselves down upon the ground and stood up alternately, appearing as if they did not know what to do with themselves: and, indeed, I may say, just as if they were in the agonies of death. In the mean time, my Hottentots made the necessary preparations, and laid each of them their javelins by the side of them. We likewise loaded all our five pieces, three of which we distributed among those of our Hottentots who spoke Dutch.

Fire and fire brands are universally reckoned, and indeed were said by my Hottentots, to be a great preservative and defence against lions and other wild beasts: they could, however, themselves mention instances, in which the lion had leaped forward to the fire, and carried off some one of them, who had been sitting round it and warming themselves. The animal too has sometimes taken its prey to so short a distance, that the poor wretch's companions have plainly heard it champing and chewing his flesh. The Hottentots desired us who were placed in the waggon, not to be in too great haste to fire in case a lion should take a leap among them, for fear that in the dark we might