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XXIX. FELIS LEO: THE LION.

PLATE XXIX.

FELIS LEO.—THE LION.

Leuew of the Cape Colonists. *Tao* of the Matabili and Bechuana.

GENERIC CHARACTER.—Adult male about three feet eight inches high at the shoulder and rather less at the rump. Extreme length usually about ten feet six inches. Figure noble and imposing; the model of activity and strength. Tail three feet long, tufted at the extremity with a tassel of black hair. Ears rounded and black. Five toes on the fore feet, four on the hind. Claws retractile, and each concealed by a tuft of blackish hair. Hair on the body and extremities, short and close, varying in colour between yellow, tawny, brown, and slate colour, according to the age of the animal; but uniformly darker on the upper parts, and lighter on the belly, where it is often dappled. The upper portions of the head, the chin, neck, shoulders and belly, covered with long silky hairs, forming a copious and shaggy mane, which sprouts during the third year, and increases in depth of shade, as the animal advances in age, until it becomes perfectly black. A tuft of black hair under the arm-pits. An angular black spot at each corner of the mouth on the lower jaw, which is white, bearded, and projects beyond the upper. Whiskers and eye-brows strong and white, each hair set in a black spot. Eye-balls yellow, pupils capable of contraction and dilation.

Lioness smaller; more slender, agile, and graceful, and destitute of any appearance of a mane. Gregarious in small troops, or solitary. Inhabits variously, but is most usually found on the open plains of the interior among reeds and long grass, or along the wooded banks of rivers. Very numerous towards the Tropic.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE AFRICAN LION.

"Now while the shades
Of night hang lowering o'er the mountain's brow,
And hunger keen, and pungent thirst of blood,
Rouse up the slothful beast, he shakes his sides,
Slow rising from his lair, and stretches wide
His ravenous jaws with recent gore distain'd.
The forest trembles as he roars aloud,
Impatient to destroy."

YE who have beheld the blood-seeking "monarch of the forest" but in crippling captivity, immured in a cage barely double his own length, until his brawny sinews have become relaxed by irksome confinement, have seen but the shadow of the lordly savage that wields the sceptre of the desert! The pen and the pencil are alike inadequate to do justice to the majesty of this terrible original as he appears when prowling at liberty over his native plains; and neither by verbal description, nor even by the most accurate of portraits can I hope to convey more than a feeble representation of him, beneath the gleam of whose tawny eye the brute creation quail. Side by side with the aristocratic Unicorn,

"the royal Lion
Rampant in golden tressure,"

a fit emblem of the courage of Britain's sons, has from time immemorial formed the most prominent figure of our national heraldry; and from the earliest periods of antiquity down to the present day, in his character of King of beasts, he has maintained over the human mind an ascendancy, which his noble and imposing presence, his gigantic bodily powers, his undaunted resolution, and his dignified self-possession, are alike calculated to inspire. That haughty growl, the deep-toned thunder of his roar, the fixed and steady gaze of his terribly expressive eye, proclaim him *facile princeps*. Combining the models of strength and of agility, his carnivorous regimen, his predatory habits, and the tremendous machinery by which he is adapted for the work of destruction, have created Leo indisputable tyrant of the waste.

It is in the scorched and desolate regions of the torrid zone, whence mankind are excluded by the rigorous heat of climate, that the Lion has established his head quarters, and may most properly be said to reign Lord Paramount.* The desert of Zahara, and the interior tracts of the vast continent of Africa, exhibit him in all his grandeur, and in uncontrolled abundance, his disposition partaking strongly of the ardour of his native soil. Residing in Southern Africa chiefly on immense open plains which are in no way redeemed from their pristine sterility by any attempt at cultivation, the Prince of the Felinæ is an inviolable attendant upon the great migratory herds of Quaggas, Gnoos, and Springboks, which there abound; and to these, rather than to the genus *Homo*, he forms an object of unceasing dread; the number of bleaching skeletons wherewith the lone pastures are embellished, fully attesting the extent of the havoc he commits. After the sun had declined towards the western horizon, when the

"shades of eve come slowly down,
And woods are wrapt in deeper brown;"

forth stalks the despot, attended by a knot of hungry vultures; and early in the morning, should his nocturnal foray have proved unsuccessful, may he be seen with tasselled tail erect, chasing his dismayed subjects over the open plain. Twice I chanced upon the dropsical carcase of a fine fat Eland whereon his Majesty had only the moment before completed an early

* From many countries to which this formidable species was once indigenous, it has long disappeared altogether; and vanishing with advancing civilization, it is now to be met with in few parts of Asia. Yet Syria, Armenia, and the classic soil of Greece were formerly overrun; numbers, we are told by Herodotus, having attacked the camels which carried the baggage of the army of Xerxes on its march through the country of the Pœonians in Macedonia; whilst Pausanias, who relates the same circumstance, adds that Lions often descended into the plains at the foot of Olympus. Judging indeed from the records of antiquity, and the relations of the Roman historians, the species must in days of yore have abounded to a miraculous extent; so many as six hundred adults having under the Consulate been engaged together in a single fight; and even in the time of the Emperors a hundred were frequently expended at once in the Circus, to minister to the insatiate appetite of the people for such brutal exhibitions. About the middle of the third century, which corresponds with the period of the Arabian emigration into Africa, the destruction of Lions became so rapid that the chase of them was forbidden except to certain individuals, lest the Circus should be deprived of its victims; but under Honorius this game law was subsequently abrogated. More would appear to have been imported from Lybia in a single year for these bloody combats in the amphitheatre than could probably now be collected in ten; and save in the heart of the African wilderness, Leo maintains at the present day so precarious a footing that he may in fact be said to define the limits of civilization.

repast, the entrails yet reeking, and the sand still moist which the prints of his heavy feet had displaced. No sooner is his appalling voice heard rolling along the ground like breakers of the sea, than every animal reposing upon the waste, starts upon its feet, and betaking itself to headlong flight, not unfrequently rushes into the teeth of the very danger it is seeking to avoid.

" There to the solitary Lion's roar
So many echoes answer that there seems
Ten in the field for one; where'er they turn,
The flying animals from cave to cave,
Hear his voice issuing, and recoil aghast
Only to meet it nearer than before;
Or e'er they see his shadow, or his face,
Fall dead before his thunder-striking paw!"

Scarcely a day passed towards the tropic without our party observing one or more either in deep repose amid the straggling thickets of brushwood and evergreens which skirt the "green pastures by the quiet waters"—issuing from their lair among clumps of reeds and mat rushes, or, "resolute and slow," promenading over the open plain in troops to the number of four or five. A shaggy truculent-looking rascal was observed on one occasion to emerge from his hiding place as the twilight drew on, stretch himself like a drowsy Tom cat, and walk steadily forward with a look that seemed to imply, "Know, Sirs, that I'm not to be trifled with." Yet, like the rest of the brute creation, Leo uniformly retreated when aware of the approach of man, seldom during the day manifesting the slightest inclination to be uncivil unless we first commenced hostilities. This fact, while it will not fail to astonish those who couple the idea of a violent and sudden death with the bare proximity of a Lion, may readily enough be accounted for by the animal's nocturnal habits, and the consequent inability of his eye, in common with that of most others of the cat tribe, to bear a strong light. The inconvenience with which he may thus be supposed to support the glare of a tropical sun reflected from a sandy soil, naturally enough begets an unwillingness to measure his strength with man, should he happen to cross his path in the full blaze of day. "Attitude, physiognomy, and language," remarks the eloquent Buffon, "proclaim the rudest savage that traverses the desert, to be lord of the prone and mute creation;" nor does the character of supremacy which the Most High hath stamped upon the human brow, fail to instil dread into the stout heart of the King of beasts, or to induce him to avoid an encounter, unless put upon his mettle, or urged to desperation by the qualms of hunger. Where animal food is so abundant as in the southern regions of Africa, this latter must be a contingency of somewhat rare occurrence; and although all feline obtruders within the precincts of our camp were saluted with a broadside from the top of the white canvas roofs of the waggons, those that could manage it were invariably suffered to effect their escape; the badness and low condition of our horses rendering us little disposed to throw down the gauntlet in the field, to "beard the Lion in his den," or to risk the issue of a combat with so formidable an enemy when rendered desperate by the smarting of gunshot wounds.

But if the unmolested Lion is little to be dreaded so long as daylight lasts, widely different is the case during the dark nights, when after a lowering evening, the clouds are wont to gather in every quarter, and the most vivid flashes of lightning serve as the forerunners of a deluge. The thunder being vertical, there is no interval between the fire and the crash, which latter may be likened to the peal of a volley of heavy ordnance, discharged in a mountain gorge, where the repercussion from surrounding heights multiplies with terrific energy its deep and astounding echoes. During every night, the Lion is abroad, patrolling the wilderness in quest of prey; but it is at such dismal periods as these that he evinces particular activity; and the fury of the elements appearing to rouse him thoroughly from his ordinary indolence and torpidity, he was then wont to beleaguer us with less than his customary caution, and appeared in no way dismayed by the incessant barking of our canine companions. Whilst a cutting blast whistled through the unsheltered waggons with a violence that bid fair to overturn them, the foe prowled around our slender breastwork, and roaring in concert with the howling of the tempest, strove ever and anon to effect his entrance into the fold. No possibility existing of keeping up the usual fires for defence against such nocturnal invasion, our cattle became momentarily more restless and uncontrollable; and aware before ourselves of the advent of their blood-thirsty enemy, struggled to break away from the inclosure, in the vain hope of escaping by flight the danger that impended; repeated volleys of firearms alone serving to allay their uneasiness, or to avert the threatened attack. It was our practice to encamp, if possible, near to a grove of mimosas, and the felling two or three dozen of those thorny trees, whilst it was a work of little labour, formed the nucleus of a ring fence, which was readily perfected by dragging outwards a few more that it was necessary to clear away from the interior; so that where wood was abundant, a tolerably substantial barrier could always be erected within half an hour of the formation of our camp. But when compelled to pass the night in the open plain without any such fortification, rarely indeed was it that we escaped the depredations of the chief of the Carnivora, a sniff of whose odour, like a dram to the Hottentots, invariably put our jaded oxen into such marvellous spirits, that they were often enabled to complete a long march after having appeared too tired to advance another step.

The first impress of the cushioned foot of the Lion, when discovered on the sandy plain, caused vast excitement among our followers, who crowded round the spot, and chattering long and incessantly, could at last with difficulty be persuaded that a grim fellow was not *looming* at them from every bush by the wayside. During the still evening that followed, shortly after the sun had ceased to shine upon us, the voice of the prowling savage, like the rumbling of an earthquake, came up

repeatedly with the breeze; and about midnight, being encamped on the broken and jungle-cumbered banks of the Meritsane, he introduced himself in a mode befitting his rank and character. An unusual commotion causing us to start from our slumbers, we found that the whole of the cattle had burst through the thorn fence, and panic-stricken, were blindly charging they knew not whither—oxen, horses, and sheep, tumbling headlong over the waggon poles, and over each other, in indescribable confusion. The night was intensely dark, and all the watchfires had gone out. Cœur de Lion, ever the first to take the alarm, had clambered upon the top of the omnibus, whence he was screaming like a woman for assistance; whilst each Hottentot, as he sprang from his sleep, was precipitately discharging his gun, loaded with a hard bullet, in any direction that the muzzle might happen to have assumed. Of our live stock, the horses were least dismayed; and after floundering about in the dark for a considerable time, and scratching ourselves considerably among the thorns, we succeeded in recovering all save one; but every endeavour to reclaim the oxen and sheep proving abortive, we retired again to our beds, having first ascertained by the light of a candle that the consternation had been caused by three Lions, that had entered the fold, and slain two of the sheep.

The moment it was light enough to see, we dispatched the Hottentots upon the tracks of the fugitives, escorted by a party of Batlapi who had passed the night in our camp. Some of these latter shortly returned with the flock, several more having however been devoured during their flight; but our own people did not make their appearance again until noon, when they imparted the exhilarating intelligence that the oxen had divided into two parties, and being dreadfully terrified, would not tarry in all probability until they should reach the Kuruman; adding, that if we were desirous of recovering a sufficient number to draw the waggons, each Hottentot must forthwith be provided with one of the best horses, and a week's supply of ammunition. Aware from sad experience of the mischief that would befall our steeds, upon whose well being our future sport entirely depended, we stoutly resisted this modest application, whereupon the whole gang, Claas and Ethaldur alone excepted, begged at once to throw up their commissions. Andries, who looked especially out of humour, was evidently the ringleader of this mutiny, as indeed was he of all mischief; but it was not until after he had been bullied into taking his departure on one of the sorriest hacks, accompanied only by Cobus, that we discovered the wretch to have been the instigator of a plot, which had at first been joined by all, to desert us in the wilderness, and abscond to the Colony with the horses and whatever other property they could lay their hands upon. Apprehensive of another attack, we shifted our camp in the afternoon to the opposite bank of the river, clearing away the jungle around the waggons, which were so drawn up on the top of a hillock as to flank the cattle enclosure—an arrangement that was ever afterwards observed with the greatest advantage. Much to our surprise, our friends the Batlapi returned about sunset with all the oxen, reporting that they had overtaken them about twelve miles off, for which signal piece of service they were rewarded, according to previous stipulation, with a yard of tobacco and a tinder-box. Cobus and Andries likewise straggled back during the night, after deeply galling the backs of both the horses, as we had anticipated, without however obtaining the smallest tidings of the lost one; and it afterwards appeared that, instead of attending to the important business upon which they were sent, they had been engaged in an attempt to destroy a Lion, that drove them fairly out of the field after nearly making an end of Cobus. The whole of the following day was passed in fruitless endeavours to recover the truant; and it was not until six months afterwards that we ascertained him to have found his way back to the farm on which he had been bred, in New Hantam, a distance of five hundred miles!

As our little party rolled further and further from the abodes of civilized man, few evenings passed during which we did not hear the solemn voice of Leo rumbling along the ground like the murmuring of distant thunder; and in return for our obtrusion upon his legitimate empire, many were the unwelcome visits that he paid us during that hour, when sleep is wont to "knit up the ravelled sleeve of care." My first and least agreeable interview with the Governor took place after the night's solitary bivouac on the banks of the Meritsane, detailed in a former chapter. Although long accustomed to the sound of his voice, and to the contemplation of his shaggy figure from the back of an elephant or of a fleet Arab horse, I confess that on the occasion in question, I neither felt soothed by his deep drawn nocturnal music, nor gratified when bestriding a jaded garron the next morning, by the bull dog aspect of his broad tawny muzzle, or the glance of his hazel eye, as he scowled at me over his shoulder. The Meritsane is a positive nest of Felinæ, and during my rambles I one morning stumbled upon a den that must from time immemorial have been the lurking-place of a whole troop, presenting as it did the appearance of a perfect Golgotha, rife with emblems of mortality, and redolent of its unsavoury inmates, who, fortunately for me, were from home at the period of my accidental visit. We found the banks of the Bagobone equally infested by the species. Being engrossed with the contemplation of a dead elephant, and with conjectures as to the when and how it had departed this life, Lingap suddenly pointed with his assegai to a bush a few yards distant, and whispered *Tao*, when I immediately perceived through the umbrage, no fewer than three Lionesses fast asleep. Ensconcing himself behind his shield, he made signs to me to fire, which I foolishly did into the middle of the party, springing at the same moment behind a tree which completely screened me. Thus unceremoniously aroused, the royal harem broke covert, roaring in concert, and bounding over brakes and bushes like so many cats over a footstool, darted into an adjacent thicket, whilst we continued our course in the opposite direction as expeditiously as our legs could carry us. I had killed a gallant water buck the preceding evening not far from this spot, and the report of my rifle caused a lion with his sleek consort to bounce out of a coppice and slink into the dense jungle; Piet,

who had been shooting a little higher up the river, also reporting on his return that whilst walking through a patch of long rank grass, he had narrowly escaped treading upon the tail of a huge black male, which he designated "*een groot zwart mannikin*." The vast abundance of the feline race in this wild spot, induced us to bestow upon our fortifications more labour than usual; nor had we any reason to repent of the precaution, numbers roaring around in every direction until the day broke, and in the face of a blazing watchfire, making three ineffectual attempts to carry the stockade by storm.

Being encamped one moonlight night on the banks of the Machachochan, north of the Cashan mountains, our slumbers were disturbed by sounds of desperate strife at no great distance, which elicited many surmises as to the nature of the noisy conflict. Proceeding at break of day to the spot, we found that "the Emperor" had done his pleasure upon an unfortunate cow giraffe, heavy in foal, that had come down to quench her thirst at a pool surrounded by tall green reeds, whence she was surprised, and overthrown on the spot.

The dark nights were usually tempestuous, but how boisterous soever they might be, the weather generally cleared up with the dawn,

"when the orient beam
With blushes paints the morn, and all the race
Carnivorous with blood full gorged retire
Into their darkest cells, there satiated snore
O'er dripping offals, and o'er mangled limbs."

Upon one occasion, however, whilst encamped near a rushy bottom, it continued until nine o'clock to pour with such violence that we were unable to open the canvas curtains of the waggon. Richardson and myself were the first astir, and peeping out during a temporary cessation to ascertain whether there existed any prospect of the rain holding up, we perceived three He-Lions insolently squatted on their hams in the open plain within one hundred yards of the cattle pound. Their round golden orbs were attentively fixed upon the oxen, whose wet coats stood on end with the cold; and watching their motions from the naked branches of a withered tree at the back of the kraal, sat a family of expectant vultures with drooping wings and ruffled plumage—their hang dog air of poverty and abject humiliation calling to mind a herd of wandering gypsies drying their rags. With a view to the dislodgment of this formidable foraging party our rifles were hastily unstrapped, but the excessive dampness of the atmosphere prevented either of them from exploding. One after another the Hottentots next sprang out of the pack waggon, and exclaiming "*Almichtig, kek daar de leuwen*," snapped each his long gun at the unwelcome intruders, as they moved sulkily away at a good round trot, and took up their position on a stony eminence within point blank range. Fresh caps and priming were quickly applied, and a general volley fired by word of command, was followed by the instantaneous demise of the largest, whose muffled cranium was perforated by two bullets at the same instant. His sinewy frame just quivered slightly—his huge head dropped upon the ground—and he was lying on his side a corpse. Swinging their tasseled tails over their backs, the survivors took warning by the fate of their companion, and dashed with a roar into a neighbouring mimosa grove. In another half hour the voice of Leo was again heard at the foot of the mountains, less than a quarter of a mile from the camp; and clambering on to the waggon top we could perceive a savage monster rampant, with his tail hoisted and whirling in a circle—charging vigorously along the base of the range—and in desperate wrath making towards John April who was tending the flock.

"Loose in the gale his mane redundant play'd,"

whilst every one instinctively snatched his weapon and calling loudly to warn the expected victim of his danger, rushed to the rescue. But without taking the smallest heed either of the shepherd or his mutton, the infuriated monster, intent upon some urgent business best understood by himself, dashed past at a lumbering gallop, roaring and lashing his dun sides, until concealed behind the mist.

Having advanced one afternoon during our return route some five and twenty miles over boundless plains covered with pale yellow dry grass, a long line of Karree trees darkening the horizon, proclaimed our approach to some hidden stream; and at a late hour we struck upon a sudden bend of the Vaal river winding abruptly between willowed banks round a narrow peninsula, the neck of which scarcely exceeded six hundred yards in breadth. Whilst our cavalcade was in the act of drawing up near a cluster of deserted Bushman wigwams, three saucy lionesses, as lank and active as greyhounds, leaped out of a bush immediately on our flank; and the lynx-eyed Piet, who vowed that he could discern the tawny muzzle of a fourth, having lustily cracked his long whip into the bush, forth there stalked a venerable lion, evidently as much subdued and enfeebled by years as the poor fellow in *Æsop's* fables, who was fain to set up for a physician. A bullet discharged from the waggon box as he walked leisurely off, 'smote him with a great smiting;' and penetrating the patriarch's shoulder, he bounded forward with a roar—thrust his hoary head into a clump of brushwood, and was gathered unto his fathers,

"Set were his teeth, his faded eye
Was firmly fixed on vacancy;"

and his demise having been tested by a volley directed against his protruded stern, his body was dragged out for inspection.

There is much of repose and grandeur about the mortal remains of Leo, and I never recollect to have seen the asserted resemblance to the human face divine, more perfectly preserved than in this subject, already in the last stage of imbecility. Years had robbed him of his pristine vigour, and the honourable scars of many a fierce conflict seamed his scabby hide. His once splendid mane had waxed scant and scraggy—his yellow fangs were worn away to their stumps—and so deeply had age furrowed his savage cheek, that with his overhanging brow and bearded under jaw, he might have furnished a handsome portrait for a toothless Jew. The weight of the Lion's body as compared with its size is very remarkable, and is accounted for by the singular density of the muscles and the compactness of the principal bones; which latter, like the teeth of the hippopotamus, will produce fire with steel. The force with which he must alight after a bound of fifteen or twenty feet is therefore sufficiently obvious, and his massy paw will batter in the skull of an ox quite as effectually as if a sledge hammer had been employed.

Among the Dutch Colonists it is a fashionable belief that there are two distinct species of the African Lion, which they designate the *vaal* and the *zwart*, or the yellow and the black variety, maintaining stoutly that the one is infinitely less ferocious than the other. But I need scarcely inform the well instructed reader that both the colour and the size depend chiefly upon the animal's age—the development of the physical powers and of the mane also—which does not sprout until the third year, but continues to increase long after the wearer has arrived at maturity,—being principally influenced by a like contingency. In point of size and complexion the South African subject differs in no respect from that found so abundantly in Guzerat—one of the only two provinces of India wherein the species exists—measuring usually between ten and eleven feet in extreme length, and varying in hue betwixt ash colour and tawny dun; but generally possessing a much more elaborate and matted mane, which peculiarity is attributable in a great measure to the less jungly character of the country that he infests, and to the more advanced age to which, from the comparatively small number of his mortal foes, he is suffered to attain. In India the Lion is often compelled to establish himself in heavy jungles, which comb out a considerable portion of the long loose silky hair about his head and neck; but this is seldom the case on the arid plains of Africa, where the covert being chiefly restricted to the banks of rivers, or to isolated springs, he rests satisfied with a less impervious shade, and is often disturbed from a clump of rushes barely large enough to conceal his portly figure.

Although probably possessing none of those magnanimous qualities that have been attributed to the Royal beast by the romantic imagery of poetical naturalists, yet when compared with the tiger—which it has already been said exists not in Africa—the Lion is unquestionably a noble animal. He displays more confidence and self-possession, with a much larger share of intrepidity than the only other cat that can vie with him in point of size or power; and he is consequently less easily irritated, and far more resolute in his charge when fairly provoked to a combat. Wounds then enrage, but rarely serve to terrify him. A tiger in full career will frequently turn at the bare report of a rifle, and whether wounded or not by the discharge, will almost invariably retreat at the flash of gunpowder in his face—but a lion, *never*; and whether in Asia or in Africa, nothing short of death, or of a wound that places him completely *hors de combat*, will divert him from his object. In the Colony, the approved method of assailing this formidable quarry is to badger him with curs of every degree, until he abandons the covert, and stands at bay in the open plain; when the band of hunters march forward in a compact body, and fire deliberately by kneeling sections from under the girths of their horses, which with their cruppers turned towards the enemy, are drawn up in form of a crescent.* The native tribes, and especially the warlike Matabili, contrive to work his destruction without the aid of fire arms, but their victories are often dearly purchased. Should a Lion attack the king's herds, either his death or that of the guardians invariably ensues. Armed only with a sheaf of assegais and an oxhide shield, they rush in upon the marauder, and generally at the expence of one or two of their lives, which are held of small account, retire

* In the year 1705, half a century after the first establishment of the Dutch at the Cape, Jos. Sterreberg Kupt, the Landdrost, proceeded on a journey into the interior to purchase oxen for the Dutch East India Company; and the following curious adventure, at which I have enjoyed many a hearty laugh, is thus quaintly related in the journal of his proceedings. Modern lions do not require so heavy an expenditure of ammunition.

"We pitched our tent about a musket shot from the kraal, and went to rest, but were soon disturbed; for about midnight the cattle and horses which were standing between the waggons, began to start and run, and one of the drivers to shout, on which every one hurried out of the tent with his gun. About thirty paces from it stood a lion, which on seeing us, walked very deliberately about thirty paces farther, behind a small thorn bush, carrying something with him, which I took to be a young ox. We fired more than sixty shots at the bush, and pierced it stoutly, without perceiving any movement. The south-east wind blew strong, the sky was clear, and the moon shone very bright, so that we could perceive every thing at that distance. After the cattle had been quieted and I had looked over every thing, I missed the sentry from behind the tent, Jan Smit, from Antwerp, belonging to the Groene kloof. We called as loudly as possible, but in vain—nobody answered; from which I concluded that the lion had carried him off. Three or four men then advanced very cautiously to the bush, which stood right opposite to the door of the tent to see if they could discover any thing of the man, but returned helter-skelter, for the lion who was still there, rose up, and began to roar. They found there the musket of the sentry, which was cocked, and also his cap and his shoes.

"We fired again about a hundred shots at the bush (which was sixty paces from the tent and only thirty from the waggons, and whereat we were able to point as at a target,) without perceiving anything of the lion, from which we concluded that he was killed, or had run away. This induced the marksman Jan Stamanz, to go and see if he was there still or not, taking with him a fire brand. But as soon as he approached the bush, the lion roared terribly, and leapt at him; on which he threw the fire brand at him, and the other people having fired about ten shots, he retired directly to his former place behind that bush.

"The firebrand which he had thrown at the lion, had fallen in the midst of the bush, and favoured by a strong south-east wind it began to burn with a great flame so that we could see very clearly into and through it. We continued our firing into it without the least intermission; the night passed away, and the day began to break, which animated every one to aim at the lion, because he could not go from thence without exposing himself entirely, as the bush stood directly against a steep kloof. Seven men, posted on the farthest waggons, watched him to take aim at him if he should come out.

from the conflict bearing with them the head and paws to their Royal master—trophies of their valour which are left to decompose within the area of the imperial kraal, every part whereof is strewn with the relics of wild animals.

The only instance in which I believe our party to have had a very narrow escape from the clutches of the Felinæ, was on the occasion adverted to in a preceding chapter, of our arrival at the source of the Likwa, immediately prior to our exit from Moselekatse's dominions. It was late in the afternoon when we prepared to unyoke, and two lions, with manes like new mops, were observed actively shifting their quarters among the labyrinth of ravines, and seeming vastly disposed to assert their pretensions to the dominion of the desert, and to dispute our right to encamp thereon. My whole attention being shortly afterwards directed towards the slaughter of a Hippopotamus that was ploughing up the turbid waters, and making directly for the shore, the first I observed of a couchant lioness was her tufted tail vibrating angrily among the grass within a yard only of my foot. Happily her buttocks were turned towards me, and her ladyship's thoughts were so full of beef, that I had time to retreat and to draw back Piet, who was even still nearer than myself, without her being aware of our intrusion; and she would have retired quietly enough, had not another of the Hottentots stupidly fired at, and turned her. Roaring, brandishing her tail, and ripe for any mischief, she dashed impetuously through the middle of our party, and had she been wounded by the discharge, there would doubtless have been a casualty amongst us; but as usual, the ball had fortunately missed the mark, and finding that we all stood to our arms, she merely favoured each with a good natured glance *en passant*, curling up her wrinkled nose, and exhibiting her white fangs, until being joined by her Royal mate, they both dived into the thick jungle, with which portions of the river bank were clothed.

I have already cited one instance of the King of beasts having been detected in the act of carousing over game that had not fallen to his own talons. Returning with Maphook on another occasion to the theatre of my morning's sport, in order to take up the horns of a koodoo which I had concealed in a bush, I was not a little surprised to find an enormous fellow, rougher than a French poodle, banqueting upon the headless trunk, whilst an odious assemblage of eager vultures garrisoned the adjacent trees, and awaited their turn when the gorged monarch should make way for them. Immediately upon my appearance, his majesty walked heavily off, expressing by a stifled growl his Royal displeasure at being thus unceremoniously disturbed at his meals. It was not, however, destined that our acquaintance should terminate here; for passing the scene of this introductory interview the following morning, Richardson and myself were suddenly made aware of the monster's presence, by perceiving a pair of round gooseberry eyes, with small jet black pupils, glaring upon us from beneath the screen of a shady bush; and instantly upon reining up our horses, out the grim savage bolted with a roar like thunder, and bounded across the plain with the agility of a greyhound. The luxuriant beauty of his shaggy black mane, which in its full and bushy grandeur almost swept the ground, tempted us, contrary to established rule, to offer him battle with the design of appropriating his *regalia*—and on putting spurs to our horses, he no sooner felt himself hotly pursued, than he swung round like a cutter letting go her anchor under a full press of canvas, and standing at bay in a mimosa grove, measured the strength of his assailants with a port the most noble and imposing. Disliking our appearance, however, and not relishing the smell of gunpowder, he soon abandoned the grove and took up a strong position on the summit of an adjacent stony hill, of which the base was so thickly clothed with thorn trees, that we could only obtain a clear view of him from the distance of three hundred yards, and were thus compelled to open battery at long range. Crouched on this fortified pinnacle like the sculptured figure at the entrance of a nobleman's park, the enemy disdainfully surveyed us for several minutes, daring us to approach with an air of conscious power and pride which well beseemed his grizzled form. As the rifle balls whizzed about his ears, and ploughed up the ground nearer and nearer at each discharge, his wrath, as indicated by his glistening eyes, increased roar, and more impatient switching of the tail, was clearly getting the mastery over his prudence. Presently a shot broke his brawny leg. Down he came upon the other three with reckless impetuosity, his tail straight out and whirling on its axis, his mane bristling on end, and his lurid eyeballs flashing rage and vengeance. Unable, however, to overtake our horses, he shortly retreated under a galling fire, limping and discomfited to his strong hold. Again we bombarded him, and again, exasperated,

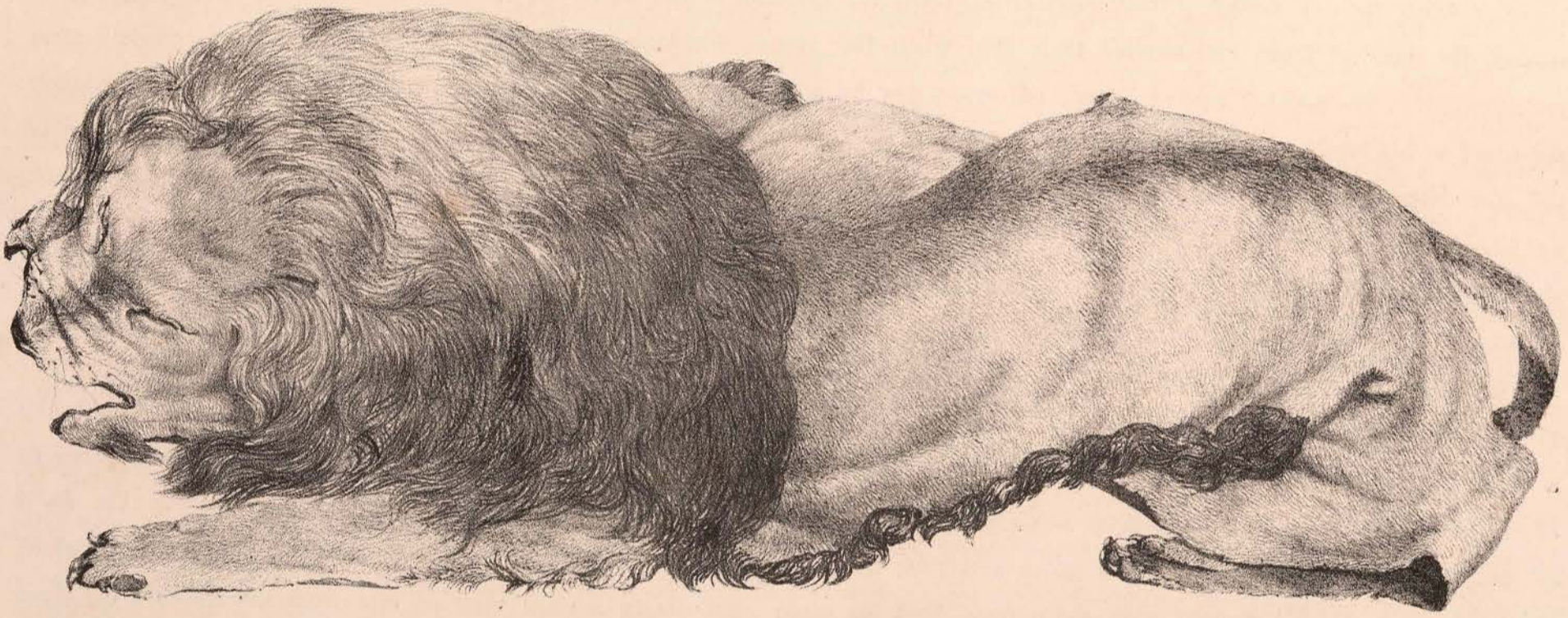
“At last before it became quite light, he walked up the hill with the man in his mouth, when about forty shots were fired at him without hitting him, although some went very near. Every time this happened he turned round towards the tent, and came roaring towards us; and I am of opinion that if he had been hit, he would have rushed on the people and the tent.

“When it became broad day-light, we perceived by the blood and a piece of the clothes of the man, that the lion had taken him away and carried him with him. We also found behind the bush, the place where the lion had been keeping the man, and it appeared impossible that no ball should have hit him, as we found in that place several balls beaten flat. We concluded that he was wounded and not far from this. The people therefore requested permission to go in search of the man's corpse in order to bring it, supposing that by our continual firing, the lion would not have had time to devour much of it. I gave permission to some, on condition that they should take a good party of armed Hottentots with them, and made them promise that they would not run into danger, but keep a good look out, and be circumspect. On this, seven of them, assisted by forty-three armed Hottentots followed the track, and found the lion about half a league further on, lying behind a little bush. On the shout of the Hottentots he sprang up and ran away, on which they all pursued him. At last the beast turned round, and rushed, roaring terribly, amongst the crowd. The people, fatigued and out of breath with their running, fired and missed him, on which he made directly towards them. The captain or chief head of the Kraal, here did a brave act in aid of two of the people whom the lion attacked. The gun of one of them missed fire, and the other missed his aim, on which the captain threw himself between the lion and the people, so close, that the lion struck his claws into the caross or skin cloak of the Hottentot. But he was too agile for him, doffed his mantle, and stabbed him with an assegai. Instantly the other Hottentots hastened on and adorned him with their assegais, so that he looked like a porcupine. Notwithstanding this he did not leave off roaring and leaping, and bit off some of the assegais, until the marksman, Jan Stamanz, fired a ball into his eye, which made him turn over, and he was then shot dead by the other people. He was a tremendously large beast, and had but a short time before carried off a Hottentot from the kraal, and devoured him.”

he rushed into the plain with headlong fury—the blood now streaming from his open jaws, and dyeing his clotted mane with crimson.

“ To his bold charge the savage turns alone,
He murmurs fury with a hollow groan;
He grins, he foams, he rolls his eyes around,
Lashed by his tail his heaving sides resound;
Calling up all his rage, he grinds his teeth,
Resolved on vengeance, or resolved on death.”

It was a gallant charge, but it was to be his last. A well directed shot arrested him in full career, he sprang into the air as if seized with vertigo—pitched with violence upon his ample skull, and throwing a complete somerset, subsided amid a cloud of dust!



Skin of African Lion as preserved by Capt. Harrie.