

AMONGST THE GRIZZLIES.



THE Grizzly Bear is peculiar to America, and is nearly twice the size of the black bear. Lewis and Clarke give the measurement of one as nine feet from the nose to the tail; and report the weight to be eight hundred pounds. It possesses great strength, and the bison contends with it in vain. It drags its carcass, often weighing a thousand pounds, to a chosen place, where it digs a pit for its reception, and feeds upon it till it is consumed, when it again renews the chase. Its food, however, is principally fruits and roots, and it has been remarked that those on the western side of the Rocky Mountains, where vegetation abounds, are less ferocious than those on the eastern side. Mr. Drummond, the botanist, in his excursions over the Rocky Mountains, had frequent opportunities of observing the manners of the grizzly bears, and it often happened that in turning the point of a rock or sharp angle of a valley he came suddenly upon one. On such occasions they reared on their hind legs, and made a loud noise, like a person breathing quick, but much harsher. He kept his ground, without attempting to molest them; and they, on their part, after attentively regarding him some time, generally wheeled round and galloped off. Had he lost his presence of mind and attempted to flee, he would most likely have been torn in pieces. When he discovered them from a distance, he commonly frightened them away by beating upon a tin box, in which he carried his plants. He never saw more than four of them together, and two of these he supposed to have been cubs. He commonly met them singly or in pairs.

He was only once attacked, and then by a female, for the purpose of allowing her cubs to escape.

The Zoological Society of London have at various times possessed five specimens of the grizzly bear. The first was Old Martin, for many years a well-known inhabitant of the Tower Menagerie. We remember him well as an enormous brute, quite blind from cataract, and generally to be seen standing on his hind legs, with open mouth ready to receive any tit-bit a compassionate visitor might bestow. Notwithstanding the length of time he was in confinement (more than twenty years), all attempts at conciliation failed, and to the last he would not permit the slightest familiarity, even from the keeper who constantly fed him. Some idea may be formed of his size, when we say that his skull (which we recently measured) exceeds in length by two inches the largest lion's skull in the Osteological Collection, although several must have belonged to magnificent animals.

After the death of Old Martin, the Society received two fine young bears from Mr. Catlin, but they soon died. Their loss, however, has been amply replaced by the three very thriving young animals which were brought from the Sierra Nevada, about eight hundred miles from San Francisco. They were transported with infinite trouble across the Isthmus of Panama, in a box carried on men's shoulders, and are certainly the first of their race who have performed the overland journey. The price asked was £600, but they were obtained at a much less sum.

Bears are extremely subject to cataract disease, and of course are thereby rendered blind. Their strength and ferocity

forbad anything being done for relief, until, by the aid of chloroform, it was demonstrated that they are as amenable to curative measures as the human subject.

On the 5th of November, 1850, the first operation of the sort was performed on one of these grizzly bears, which was blind in both eyes. As this detracted materially from his value, it was decided to endeavour to restore him to sight; and Mr. White Cooper having consented to operate, the proceedings were as follows:—

A strong leathern collar, to which a chain was attached, was firmly buckled around the patient's neck, and the chain having been passed round one of the bars in front of the cage, two powerful men endeavoured to pull him up, in order that a sponge containing chloroform should be applied to his muzzle. The resistance offered by the bear was as surprising as unexpected. The utmost efforts of these men were unavailing; and, after a struggle of ten minutes, two others were called to their aid. By their united efforts, Master Bruin was at length brought up, and the sponge fairly tied round his muzzle.

Meanwhile the cries and roarings of the patient were echoed in full chorus by his two brothers, who had been confined to the sleeping den, and who scratched and tore at the door to get to the assistance of their distressed relative. In a den on one side was the cheetah, whose leg was amputated under chloroform some months before, and who was greatly excited by the smell of the fluid and uproar. The large sloth bear in a cage on the other side, joined heartily in the chorus, and the Isabella bear just beyond, wrung her paws in an agony of woe. Leopards snarled in sympathy, and laughing hyænas swelled the chorus with their hysterical sobs. The octobasso growling of the polar bears, and roaring of the lions on the other side of the build-

ing, completed as remarkable a diapason as could well be heard.

The first evidence of the action of the chloroform on the bear, was a diminution in his struggles; first one paw dropped, then the other. The sponge was now removed from his face, the door of the den opened, and his head laid upon a plank outside. The cataracts were speedily broken up, and the bear was drawn into the cage again. For nearly five minutes he remained, as was remarked by a keeper, without knowledge, sense, or understanding, till at length one leg gave a kick, then another, and presently he attempted to stand. The essay was a failure, but he soon tried to make his way to his cage. His route to his den was ludicrous in the extreme. At length he blundered into it, and was left quiet for a time. He soon revived, and in the afternoon ate heartily. The following morning, on the door being opened, he came out, staring about him, caring nothing for the light, and began humming, as he licked his paws.

A group might have been dimly seen through the fog which covered the garden, on the morning of the 15th of the same month, standing on the spot where the proceedings above narrated took place ten days previously. They were assembled to witness a similar operation on another of the grizzly bears. The bear this time was brought out of the den, and his chain passed round the rail in front of it. Diluted chloroform was used, and the operation was rendered more difficult by the animal not being perfectly under its influence. He recovered immediately after the couching-needle had been withdrawn from the second eye, and walked pretty steadily to his sleeping apartment, where he received the condolence of his brethren, rather ungraciously it must be confessed, but his head was far from clear, and his temper was for some days after somewhat ruffled.