

quently happened that I found myself quite alone with the wild beasts. An annual guinea entitled me to go as often as agreeable, which happened so frequently, that the animals soon knew me by sight, whilst with some of them, for instance the elephant, I obtained quite a friendly footing. Even Nero looked kindly on me, and the rest of the creatures did not eye me with the glances half shy and half savage which they threw at less familiar visitors.

But there was one notable exception. The royal Bengal tiger could not or would not recognise me, but persisted in growling and scowling at me as a stranger, whom of course he longed to take in. Nevertheless there was a fascination in his terrible beauty, and quite in his enmity, that often held me in front of his cage, enjoying the very impotence of his malice, and recalling various tragical tales of human victims mangled or devoured by such striped monsters as the one before me; and, as if the cunning brute penetrated my thoughts, he would rehearse, as it were, all the man-eating manoeuvres of the species: now creeping stealthily round his den, as if skulking through his native jungles, then crouching for the fatal spring, and anon bounding against the bars of his cage, with a short, angry roar, expressive of the most fiendish malignity. By the by, madam, did you ever hear of the doctrine of Instinctive Antipathies?

'Yes, sir, and Mr. Lamb or Mr. Hazlitt quotes an instance of two strangers, who, on meeting each other in the street, immediately began to fight.'

Well, madam, there seemed to be some such original antipathy between me and the tiger. At any rate he took a peculiar pleasure, in my presence, in ostentatiously parading his means of offence. Sometimes stretching one huge muscular leg between the bars, he unsheathed and exhibited his tremendous claws, after which, with a devilish ogre-like grin, he displayed his formidable teeth, and then by a deliberate yawn, indulged me with a look into that horrible red gulf, down which he would fain have bolted me in gobbets. The yawning jaws were invariably closed with a ferocious snap, and the brutal performance was wound up with a howl so unutterably hollow and awful, so cannibalish, that even at its

hundredth repetition it still curdled my very blood, and thrilled every nerve in my body.

'Lord! what a dreadful creature.'

Very, ma'am. And yet that carnivorous monster, capable of appalling the heart of the bravest man, failed once to strike terror into one of the weakest of the species—a delicate little girl, of about six years old, and rather small for her age. She had been gazing at the tiger very earnestly for some minutes, and what do you think she said?

'Pray what, sir?'

'Oh, Mr. Cross, if ever that beautiful great pussy has young ones, do save me a kitten!'

On the morning of the first of May, 1822, between nine and ten o'clock, I entered the menagerie of Exeter Change, and walked directly, as usual, into the great room appropriated to the larger animals. There was no person visible, keeper or visitor, about the place—like Alexander Selkirk, 'I was Lord of the Fowl and the Brute,' I had the lions all to myself. As I stepped through the door my eyes mechanically turned towards the den of my old enemy, the royal Bengal tiger, fully expecting to receive from him the customary salutes of a spiteful grin and a growl. But the husky voice was silent, the grim face was nowhere to be seen. The cage was empty!

My feeling on the discovery was a mixed one of relief and disappointment. Methought I breathed more freely from the removal of that vague apprehension which had always clung to me, like a presentiment of injury sooner or later from the savage beast. A few minutes, nevertheless, spent in walking about the room, convinced me that his departure had left a void never properly to be filled up. Another royal tiger, larger even, and as ferocious, might take his place—but it was unlikely that the new tenant would ever select me for that marked and personal animosity which had almost led me at times to believe that we inherited some ancient feud from our respective progenitors. An enemy as well as a friend of old standing, though not lamented, must be missed. It must be a loss, if not to affection, to memory and association, to be deprived of even the ill-will, the frown, or sneer of an old familiar