



THE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

O everyone who has read the ancient and amusing apologue of "Reynard the Fox" (and who is there in these days of translations who has not?) the Zoological Gardens in the Regent's Park will scarcely fail to recall the amusing report which it contains of the parliament of the animals assembled, before the lion king, for the purpose of legislating upon the delinquencies of that astute quadruped. Within its pleasant circle of shrubs and flowers, we shall find representatives of animal constituencies in every quarter of the globe; from the North Pole to the Torrid Zone; from Chili to Cochinchina; from Nova Zembla to New Zealand. Their sphere of action has, it is true, become somewhat restricted, since the time of Reinecke; but here they have certainly acquired some very compensating advantages. Never, surely, were any members

of the brute creation the objects of more tender solicitude, even in the palmy days of the White Cat and Helicabalus. The Houyhnhms, in whose kingdom, according to that veracious chronicler Mr. Gulliver, man was the inferior being, were not more dutifully waited upon by him than are the denizens of this animal colony. Here some thirty attendants are daily occupied in supplying their requirements; every variety of viand that animal epicurism can desire is forthcoming to meet their several heavy *pièces de résistance* of the bullock and the horse, to the lighter delicacies of mice and minnows; every plan that ingenuity and science can devise is called into requisition to secure their comfort; a select detachment of the police force is provided to shield them from the importunate attentions of too troublesome visitors; special means of defence are provided, where necessary, against enemies from with-

out, and appropriate aids to recreation for the employment of their leisure within. Such of them as are delicate have the very atmosphere adapted to their constitutions; and, should any of the ordinary maladies of life find entrance into this Zoological Utopia the best advice during illness, and even change of air afterwards, are secured for its fortunate inmates. With such advantages, it is scarcely a matter of surprise that, like the travelled monkey of the fable, they should appear as reconciled to regular dinner hours, limited domestic accommodation, and morning visitors, as though they had been accustomed all their days to those comforts of civilised life.

How small a number of the gay visitors who saunter here on a Saturday to hear the band, or on a Sunday to display themselves in all the aristocratic exclusiveness of Fellows' friends; how few of their hardworking brothers and sisters who toil up from the remotest ends of the town to see the "birds and beasts" for sixpence on a Monday, have any adequate idea of the difficulties which have been surmounted, and the springs of action which have been set in motion, to assemble the various members of this animal congress. Consuls have laboured for it; Monarchs have contributed to it; Governments have employed their far-extending resources in its behalf; and even trading companies have borne it in mind when negotiating with the primitive inhabitants of remote lands. Hence it is, that we are enabled to boast a collection of living zoological examples unequalled by any similar institution in the whole world, and possessing elements of interest for every age and every class.

To the visitor of mature years, who strolls in from the bustle of the great world for an hour's quiet enjoyment, they will appeal with associations at every turn. Is he a traveller? Let him have wandered to the farthest ends of the globe, he will here recognise ancient acquaintances. Here is the spring-bok he has hunted in Africa; and the cobra, deadliest of serpents, from whose fangs he had so narrow an escape in his days of Griffinhood at Madras; the bison, upon whose hump he has epicurised with the Ioway Indians; and the alligator, ho

never could get a shot at on the banks of the Nile. The archæologist, too, may here minister to his own peculiar hobby, and find scope for his organ of veneration in the sacred ibis of the ancient Egyptians, or pierce for a moment the mists of centuries as he gazes on the asp of Cleopatra. Belongs he merely to that numerous class who love to feast on horrors, he may, if he so will it, stand on the very den of the lion, or watch the "eye malign" of the tiger glaring at him through an half-inch grating. And if, more fortunate still, it has been his lot to find in the modes of life of the animal creation his daily labour, like the indefatigable Mr. Mitchell; the pleasantest of "Recreations," like Mr. Broderip; or have discovered springs of interest in them even when dead, like the enthusiastic Mr. Waterton; he may find here a field of enjoyment for which the world affords no parallel. To the child, when, quitting for the morning his "Lessons in Natural History" and his "Noah's Ark," he is permitted for the first time to behold the heroes of his studies and the companions of his play-hours in actual life, the Zoological Gardens are a veritable paradise. There is even delight to him in a mere walk round the circle in the Regent's Park in which they are located, upon the chance of hearing the, to him, musical roar of the lion, or catching an illicit glance at some Bruin at the top of his pole.

I remember as though it were yesterday—it matters not how long ago it really was—the happy day, when a month's good conduct and the opportune visit from the country of my prettiest of cousins, Kate, procured me my first entry into this Garden of Eden. The delight of a walk up that well-kept gravel path, hand-in-hand with the object of my devoted admiration, is with me as though it were yesterday. The fact is, my little cousin was my first love; and why not? If I were but ten years old and she a year younger, had we not love enough and to spare for three times the age? First, I recollect there were the bears, that dwelt in the pit with the pole in the middle, at the end of the walk. There was a peculiar fascination about the bears; whether this was attributable to their being the first "personæ" of the drama, and possessing, therefore, the prestige of novelty, or whether the indefinable charm arose from the shade of possibility which may have suggested itself to us of falling in, and being summarily devoured, like the apocryphal baby held out by nurse as a warning against approaching too close to the abyss, I cannot say, but the bears were certainly the lions of the show. There was the industrious bear, which earned a precarious livelihood by climbing up the pole for the guerdon of a piece of bun, held tantalizingly at the end of a stick, and always dropped off in the moment of fruition; the tyrannical bear, whose strength disdained such labour, and who contented himself with monopolising all the eatables that fell to the bottom; and the meek, ill-used Bruin, whose lean carcass and ragged skin betokened the victim, and which, either from obtuseness of intellect or consciousness of weakness, defeated all our efforts to make special provision for him, even when we dropped the food almost into his mouth. Then there was the lion, reposing disdainfully in a corner, and insensible alike to blandishment or insult; and the catlike panther next door, ever on the move, pacing from end to end of his narrow home, as though seeking rest and never finding it. How proud was I to awaken the tender solicitude of my little companion by the valour of my approach to the bars of the hyena's cage; or her wonder at my erudition, when recounting to her the time-honoured legend of the lady that frightened away the tiger with a flirt of her parasol. Then there was the Polar bear, that could not be prevailed upon to go into the water; and the beavers, that would not come out; and the monkeys, which at that time possessed detached residences at the tops of poles, to which they were fastened by sliding chains. One black malefactor acquired in both our eyes an interest far beyond any that his personal attractions could claim for him—for he was by no means the most ugly—by reason of his having, a short time previously, bitten off the thumb of a gentleman with whom we had the good fortune to be personally acquainted. There was to us a mysterious horror about this criminal which rendered him irresistibly attractive; indeed, I am by no means sure that, generally, the evil characters were not the most popular with us. For the deer and the ducks we cared but little, but in the wolves and hyenas we revelled greatly. Of the other attractions of that happy day I have only a dim recollection, but sure I am that if the second lustrum of my life boasted a special era of bliss, this was it.

My second and last trip to the Zoological Gardens was of a more recent date. Paying an early visit, a few months ago, at the house of a friend of some years' standing, where I enjoyed the privilege of presenting myself at unpresentable hours, I was made aware, by an unwonted bustle in the house, that an expedition was on the tapis. That it was one likely to be somewhat trying to the patience and complexion of mamma I divined from the circumstance, that on the breakfast table, beside the parasol, lay a volume of the "Standard Library," and one of those hateful portable sunbunds wherewith ladies are wont to disgrace themselves on sunny days, and against which, in the name of the opposite sex, I hereby enter a solemn protest. Nurse's best bonnet and Sunday shawl indicated that baby was to be of the party; and an unwonted bustle of small footsteps in the hall at an hour usually devoted to "backboard" and "Mangnall's Questions" proclaimed that the holiday was to be general. "It is Kitty's birthday," said my friend, glancing at a little flaxen-headed image of herself, who was waiting with demure impatience for the toss up in the air for which I had been unwary enough, on some former occasion, to afford her a precedent. "It is Kitty's birthday, and we are going, in her honor, to spend the morning at the Zoological Gardens. You had better come too," she added, "and afford us the advantage of your escort and knowledge of natural history." Disclaiming with equal truth and humility any deep acquaintance with the mysteries of zoology, I was easily persuaded to make one of an expedition which promised, from old associations, to be an amusing one. In a few minutes we were on our road, a merry party, and I found myself wending my way to the "happy valley" of that pleasant holiday of

my childhood, and with the same companion on my arm. Yes, my lady friend was my cousin Kate herself, who, unmindful of the plighted vows of nine years old, had forsaken me at nineteen for "my own familiar friend;" and, alas for the callousness of man, I had survived it. From being, as Præd has it—

The first, the only one,
Her heart had thought of for a minute

I had subsided into the unsatisfactory honours of godpapa and Cousin Jerry (my name is Gerald, by the way, and not Jerry) to a little miniature copy of the original, almost as pretty and five times as mischievous.

While I was thus recalling the "airy edifices" of my early days, and wondering how it happens that those we build with all the experiences of age are not a whit more substantial, we had arrived at our destination, and the gardens opened to us in all the glory of a July morning. The blue tickets which were necessary of yore to secure admission, and which gave one all the trouble of acquiring a privilege without any of the advantages attending it, had yielded to the more liberal spirit of the times: we had only to pay our money, and the little world with all its attractions was our own. But what a change had taken place since my last visit; new buildings had arisen in every direction, and fresh enclosures extended on every side. On the right had started up a new aviary, picturesque enough for the feathered heroes of the Countess d'Aulnois herself. Here were choice birds of every race and every clime, dwelling together like the happy family, though considerably more active in their felicity. Here the New Guinea pigeon had found a corner worthy to be the depository of her eggs, the bower bird had erected the leafy home to which he owes his name, and the screamer was busy justifying his peculiar appellation with as keen a zest as though enjoying the free expanse of his native woods. In neighbouring enclosures (the terror of all around him), stalked in sullen dignity the Marabou stork, with his dangerous bill, bald pate, and much-prized feathers; the kangaroo was hopping about in peace, without fear of the hunter; and the reindeer enjoying an unquiet rest after the labours of the Lapland sledge. We turned to the bear-pit, as to a cherished memory; but, alas, death had been busy in the family: the labours of the industrious bear were over; the tyrant had yielded to a tyranny more potent than his own; and the victim slept the sleep of the just. The lions and tigers—or, to be scientific, the *carnivora*—had exchanged the clumsy wooden houses of former days for airy apartments, bedroom and sitting-room, in a long well-built terrace, of which we have a glimpse in the preceding page, where they seemed to dwell in tolerable unanimity. Further east rose a building, also new to us, which we found to be specially devoted to the eagles and vultures. There was something peculiarly interesting in thus having members of the same family from every quarter of the globe assembled under one roof. Motionless, perched upon pinnacles of rock, as though disdainful to stir in their narrow homes, sat the Imperial eagle, bird of Jove, worthy to be the emblem of sovereignty, from the sands of Africa; and its golden relative from the antipodes of North America; the Australian eagle rough and rugged as the wildest forests Leichardt ever traversed; and the erne that still lingers in our own. Here, too, grandest perhaps of all, ever immovable, sat the bald sea eagle, with its white head and old and storm-beaten front, eloquent of wreck and tempest, like an embodied spirit of evil.

After a glance at a large building in the course of erection, filled with glass compartments, intended for the reception of fish, and where we may one day make the personal acquaintance of the whale and shark, we crossed the tunnel, and found ourselves on the other side of the road. Here, amid such a profusion of zoological novelties, the difficulty was to determine where to go first. Mamma, I suspect, not without visions of a seat, was eloquent on the attractions of the humming-bird house. I had an acquaintanceship to renew with a pair of elands, the bequest to the society of its last president, the late Lord Derby, and which were old friends of mine at Knowsley. The younger members of our party, whom we could not prevail upon to be tired, having exhausted all their supply of provender by a somewhat prodigal liberality to the monkeys, were for returning to the refreshment-room, to lay in fresh stores for the elephant. All this was, however, duly accomplished, and more too. Here we encountered the rhinoceros—surely the unicorn of Scripture—looking, with its gigantic tusks and scaly hide, like some link, which nature had forgotten to break, with the wonders of the Preadamite world. To the hippopotamus we also paid our homage. He was lying lazily on his side, and we were his only visitors. I thought of the time when polkas were composed in his name, and his portrait adorned the print-shops; when his *teedes* were more crowded than even those of Royalty; and he wrested the honors of Lionhood from the Nepaulese Ambassador himself; and I sighed involuntarily over the instability of human greatness. Of the attractions of the reptile-house at the other end of the walk—of the intermittent crackling of the rattle-snakes—of the alligators scuttling in their miniature Niles, and the dread pythons dragging their slow lengths along in the sun, in their homes of glass—of the chimpanzee, shocking from its likeness to humanity, causing an involuntary doubt where instinct ends and reason commences—space is wanting me to tell. Morning had warmed into mid-day, and mid-day had waned to afternoon, ere we took our departure. The hour's expedition to please the children had proved a day's enjoyment to ourselves. "The Standard Library" had yielded precedence to Mr. Mitchell's pleasantly-written guide-book, which is not only a useful catalogue for the occasion, but an agreeable companion afterwards. Every object we had encountered seemed to have suggested a thought, or awakened an association; and we wended our way homewards, full of musings on the mightiness of those works of creation, which, while almost miracles to our childhood, are hardly less objects of reverential wonder to our maturer years.