

# E TENEBRIS

BOOK TWO

C.H. KEELING

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1834

The Spanish Inquisition is finally abolished (!) and Louis Braille who was accidentally blinded at the age of three invents a system of raised point writing that will enable the blind to "read"; 35,000 slaves in South Africa are freed as slavery comes to an end in the British Empire; the Houses of Parliament are destroyed by fire caused by a clerk's carelessness; and the essayist Charles Lamb dies.

Eugene Delacroix paints "Algerian Women At Home" and Edward George Bulwer-Lytton writes "The Last Days Of Pompeii".

The year began with a total of 322 visitors - 279 of which were Payers - which enriched the Society by £13.19.0., while six guidebooks were sold too; we shall take a detailed look at one of these later on. The only PV was Mr. Sabine. Unfortunately "3 Land Tortoises died (viz) 1 Large and 2 small"; another died the next day, while on the 3rd the death was recorded of the other Roseate Parrakeet. Other losses this first week were a Shama, a Muntjac which had been presented by Colonel Sykes, the Barbary Partridge listed unwell on New Year's Eve and a Rhesus Monkey.

1834's first arrival was a Gannet "or Solan Goose" presented by E.N. Hart - or it might have been one of three Angora Rabbits "broforth" as both occurred on the 7th!

During the next week a Rhesus Monkey was presented by Dr. Atkinson, a "Spanish Mastiff Dog" as a gift from Don Cascarca of Madrid and "3 Fowls (not named)" came from General Yates, but deaths included those of a Golden Pheasant presented by Mr. Fuller (this was on the 9th, but for some strange reason it was recorded again the next day), a Kangaroo, a White-headed Parrot, a Chameleon and a Rattlesnake - the last two having lived longer than I thought they would as at the time they had absolutely nowhere to house reptiles properly - in fact John Edwards was probably not far short of the mark when he said "they were housed in boxes, here and there."

"The Parrots" were removed from House 50 to "new building" - the first intimation anywhere that what seems to have been the world's first Parrot House had been in the course of construction - and "small Quadrupeds from new Building to House 50". (By the simple and speedy expedient of consulting the map I learn to my surprise that House 50 was the Wapiti House!) The Barbary Partridge was "removed from moveable Aviaries (14) to Aviary (27) for better accommodation."

Lawn. Chinese Vultures do. Tapirs removed from Temporary Building to House 28 North Garden." The following day "Removed Eagles and Vultures from Repository to Summer Quarters."

The 14th - a Tuesday - saw a PV line-up like something out of Debrett, with Lord Stanley, Sir Robert Heron, Colonel Sykes, Captains Mangles and Bowles, Lord Surrey, Drs. Horsfield and Hall, plus Messrs. Sabine, Vigors, Owen, Bennett, Hardistry, Broderip, Hamilton, Gordon - everyone, it would appear, bar Old Uncle Tom Cobleigh...

During May's third week six Land Tortoises and a "Jacketed Monkey" were presented by Sir (indecipherable) Porter; 15 Nightingales purchased from Mr. Blake; two American Jays from Lord Stanley; an Indian Fox from Mr. Bale; a White-crested Cockatoo bought off Mr. Alderton and an Alpine Mastiff as the gift of Thomas Howard of Yattendon, Berkshire. 16 Red Grouse eggs came from Admiral Fleming - who, I'm beginning to think, owned a moorland shoot somewhere - while nine Partridge eggs were sent by Mr. Daniell.

The Nyl-Ghau were removed from the Carpenters' Yard to the Court Yard and the remaining Sing Sing from the temporary building also to the Court Yard. Deaths were those of a "Guinea Pintado" (Guinea Fowl - Pintado is its Portuguese name), a Fezzan Sheep, a Gannet and an African Leopard. A hen Common Pheasant was killed by a Reeves' Pheasant and an Angora Rabbit was (perhaps!) killed by an Armadillo.

It's now the closing days of the month, and a male Persian Cat is presented by Mr. Giles from Enfield; an Agouti is given by "W.R. Read Esq Mitre Court Temple"; two "Dogs" belonging to Captain Whitehead were sent "to be taken care of" (to be referred to in future as TBICO, if that's all right with you); a Goat comes in from Captain Wimble-Money Nigram (as my grandfather would have said, "What a name to go to bed with") of 13 Devonshire Street, Portland Place; and eight Tortoises of unstated species were presented by J. Russell Reeves. Most important and highly unexpected, though, was the laconically reported "A Rhinoceros purchased of Captain Farquison (?)" on the 25th.

This was an example of the Indian Rhinoceros, believed then to be about four years old, and the first of the species, or the Family, to be represented at R.P. A male, it lived there for over 15 years, but oddly enough its name - assuming it had one - doesn't seem to have been recorded. For reasons not immediately clear now, there arose a most peculiar and fanciful legend that it was destined to be killed by Jack, the Asiatic Elephant; this has been written up by several people - who apparently are unable to cope with simple arithmetic - and it's high time it was laid to rest. As a typical example, let's see what Wilfrid Blunt has to say about the non-event in his "The Ark In The Park",

Of Jack "He was a tremendous tusker who achieved...notoriety by killing in 1849 the Indian Rhinoceros. Broderip writes that the Rhino 'was constantly forced upon his belly by the pugnacious Elephant, who pressed his tusks upon the back of his neighbour when he came near the palings which separated their enclosures. This rough treatment appears to have led to his death, as Professor Owen found, on dissecting the

massive brute, which weighed upwards of two tons, that the seventh rib had been fractured at the bend near the vertebral end; and had wounded the left lung.'" This Rhinoceros died on 19th September 1849, as per both Flower and Richard J. Reynolds, the American authority on captive Rhinoceroses, plus the OB for that day - yet on the same page (163) Blunt states, correctly, that Jack died on Sunday 6th June 1847! The whole tale is too ludicrous to countenance and I'm surprised it's taken so long for someone to expose it for the fabrication it is. I'm aware there could be some who would challenge what I've just said, and assert Jack could have caused this animal's death, or even that it could have been another Elephant at fault, but a) no mammal could live for over two years with a punctured lung and b) after Jack's death the next R.P. Elephant to bear tusks was Jumbo, who arrived in the mid-1860s, so such suggestions need not be taken seriously.

To return to the OB, deaths included those of a Capuchin Monkey after only 12 days in the collection, a Shoveller, a Barred Owl which had been unwell for two days (unusual for a bird to be thus recorded), "a Fowl (not named)" and "1 lamb of the Dorset breed killd for sick Tigers" which had been ill for some time, the lamb that is. There's an entry on the 26th that conceals as much as it reveals - "2 Rhesus Monkeys presented by the Mendicety (sic) Society given up to there (sic) former masters." - although I suspect some sort of row, a "misunderstanding" today, had raged beforehand. Under "Works" was the making of new Walks and the excavation of a well, and a Sambur stag had shed his "horns".

In June's first week a "Monkey" was purchased of Mr. Freeth; two "Doves (not named)" were presented by J. Parkinson, Esq.; a "Tortoise" came from just J.R. Reeves this time; and two Siskins were given by Mr. Leach of 14 Grafton Street, Fitzroy Square - who also deposited two Barred Doves TBTCO. Nine Summer Ducks hatched but a Chinese Quail died and a Wild Pig sow was removed to the Carpenters' Yard.

During the next week an "Ocelot American" (where else is it supposed to come from?) was presented by Boyd Alexander, Esq., of 15 Hanover Terrace; two Balearic Cranes were given by Mr. R.W. Hay and a "Curassow from Africa (not named)" came from Captain Beaufort, R.N., but before we toss our heads and look heavenwards at the unlikely source of this South American bird, bear in mind it might well have originated there - remember a certain Sykes' Monkey. A Muscovy Duck, a Barnacle Goose and several Nightingales died, while a "Corsican lamb" was killed "for sick Tigers", but the most serious loss was that of a Sambar hind which was reported "ill in fawning" on the 9th, and dead the next day. 39 Poultry, described as "surplus Fowls" were sold to Mr. Wright and an Axis Deer "shed his horns".

Four Nightingales died during June's third week, as also did a White-fronted Lemur sent by Broderip TBTCO, a "Canary Finch" and, worst of all, a male Tiger presented by William Hornby and which had been ill for some considerable time. New arrivals were an Azara's Opossum presented by Thomas Bell (at that time there was a good naturalist of this name: perhaps it was him) of 17 New Broad Street, The City, and a Summer Duck hatched there. A couple of Guinea Pigs were sold to Mrs.