

Leigh Hunt (1784-1859)

5 *The Glove and the Lions*

King Francis was a hearty king, and loved a royal sport,  
And one day as his lions fought, sat looking on the court;  
The nobles filled the benches, and the ladies in their pride,  
And 'mongst them sat the Count de Lorge, with one for whom he sighed:  
And truly 'twas a gallant thing to see that crowning show, 5  
Valour and love, and a king above, and the royal beasts below.

Ramped and roared the lions, with horrid laughing jaws;  
They bit, they glared, gave blows like beams, a wind went with their paws;  
With wallowing might and stifled roar they rolled on one another,  
Till all the pit with sand and mane was in a thunderous smother; 10  
The bloody foam above the bars came whisking through the air;  
Said Francis then, 'Faith, gentlemen, we're better here than there.'

De Lorge's love o'erheard the King, a beauteous lively dame  
With smiling lips and sharp bright eyes, which always seemed the same;  
She thought, the Count my lover is brave as brave can be; 15  
He surely would do wondrous things to show his love of me;  
King, ladies, lovers, all look on; the occasion is divine;  
I'll drop my glove, to prove his love; great glory will be mine.

She dropped her glove, to prove his love, then looked at him and smiled;  
He bowed, and in a moment leaped among the lions wild: 20  
The leap was quick, return was quick, he has regained his place,  
Then threw the glove, but not with love, right in the lady's face.  
'By God!' said Francis, 'rightly done!' and he rose from where he sat:  
'No love,' quoth he, 'but vanity, sets love a task like that.'

1836

(From *The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt*. Ed. H. S. Milford. Oxford UP, 1923)