

## **Tigers, Ladies, and Semi-Barbaric Royals**

“The Lady or the Tiger”

By Frank R. Stockton

Five Stars

Emma Webb 11/29/16

Two doors. Which do you choose? In “The Lady or the Tiger” by Frank R. Stockton, a king has come up with a new and creative way to deal with accused criminals. He creates an arena with two doors. Behind one, is a lady, and behind the other is a vicious tiger. The accused has to open one, either he will wed the lady, and will be proved innocent, or he will be ripped to shreds, and found guilty. One day, the semi-barbaric king discovers that his daughter is secretly in love with a commoner. The king, angry, casts the man into the arena to open a door. The king’s daughter knows which door holds the tiger, and which the lady. Which door will the man open? Will she tell him which door is right? To find out, read “The Lady or the Tiger” .

“The Lady or the Tiger” is a wonderfully written riddle about character and perception. Frank R. Stockton’s writing is well thought out, and observant. You get to know the characters well in such a short amount of writing. For example, in the beginning of the story, Stockton introduces the king well. “In the very olden time, there lived a semi-barbaric king, whose ideas, though somewhat polished and sharpened by the progressiveness of distant Latin neighbors, were still large, florid, and untrammelled, as became the half of him which was barbaric. He was a man of exuberant fancy, and of an authority so irresistible that, at his will, he turned his varied fancies into facts. He was greatly given to self-communing; and, when he and himself agreed upon anything, the thing was done.” This section gives a brief, yet detailed description of the king. It clearly expresses the fact that the king likes to get things done the way he wants, but his ideas can be wild and unreasonable. I also thought that the author used really good vocabulary to describe personalities. For example, when describing the king, he uses words like “genial, florid, and untrammelled.” Stockton’s vocabulary is strong, and advanced. This improves the story by compressing a whole bunch of detail into one word.

Stockton's writing is an interesting mixture of the poetic and humorous. He makes the horrible situation almost seem funny. The author does this by making the circumstance seem so simple and almost pleasant. One instance of this is shown, when Stockton writes about the arena. "The arena of the king was built, not to give the people an opportunity of hearing the rhapsodies of dying gladiators, nor to enable them to view the inevitable conclusion of a conflict between religious opinions and hungry jaws, but for purposes far better adapted to widen and develop the mental energies of the people. This vast amphitheater, with its encircling galleries, its mysterious vaults, and its unseen passages, was an agent of poetic justice, in which crime was punished, or virtue rewarded, by the decrees of an impartial and incorruptible chance." This passage demonstrates the type of writing the author uses to make the reader feel that the story is light-hearted, while actually being horrible. All in all, Frank R. Stockton uses advanced language to create an interesting, slightly humorous, short tale.

I would give this short story five out of five stars. It made me smile. It was fresh, light, humorous, but it also has good vocabulary and great character writing. It makes you think. "The Lady or the Tiger," reminded me of lots of Greek myths, Icarus and Daedalus, The Odyssey, The Sword of Damocles, but most of all, Eurydice. In Eurydice, Orpheus goes to the Underworld to gain his love, Eurydice, back from Hades. He is told not to look back at Eurydice until they reach Earth. If he does, she will be lost forever. The two stories both have a character who has to make a difficult choice that judges their personality. Of course, Orpheus had more of a controlled choice, but the man in "The Lady or the Tiger" had to pick without knowing what would happen. Both are great short stories, but I encourage you to read "The Lady or the Tiger" because it is a very interesting concept, the writing has effective language and details. This story will keep you on edge trying to figure out: Was it the lady or the tiger?