

«The Lady, or the Tiger?»<sup>1</sup>—A New Solution.

Time: Summer. Place: Mrs. Darrell-King's Veranda.

Mrs. Alexander Powers (lowering her parasol, and ascending the steps): «Mrs. King is the wily spider who waylays us. It is charming to stop midway between the beach and hotel, and find the very people one would rather see.»

Chorus: «Thank you.» «Oh, how lovely!»

Miss Elizabeth Whiteford Blake (following, with a book in her hand): «Just the hour, too, at the shore, when one is so aimless. Life has no object this morning—probably because I have finished 'Degeneration.'»

Mrs. Willie Denzell (in a steamer chair, studying the beach through her lorgnette): «Imagine having an object before luncheon!»

Mrs. Powers (taking the wicker chair proffered by Mrs. King): «Bless you, I have one! My entire attention is absorbed in trying not to look limp. Alexander says that for a quiet resort this is the most hair-curling place he ever encountered.»

Chorus: «Oh!» «Ah!»

Miss Del Terrett (from the hammock): «Men hate limp women. I don't blame them. I hate 'em myself. We never look more forlorn, though, than the men when they go down to the beach with those tiger-striped robes over their bathing-suits.»

Mrs. Powers: «They don't feel tigerish. A man is never so helpless as when he has to leave his hat at home.»

Mrs. Darrell-King (crocheting): «At least, so we imagine.»

Miss Van Mack (adjusting her glasses): «Yes. I find that we are prone to endow others with our point of view, and take it for granted that certain results must spring from the causes which are most apparent to us. We always know just what the other person thinks and feels, because we should think and feel so under similar circumstances. Whereas, in our characters there may be only one touch of nature to make us kin, and all the other touches diametrically opposed.»

Miss Del Terrett: «Dear me!»

Miss Van Mack: «Take the threadbare subject of 'The Lady, or the Tiger?' What is the use of discussing what every woman would have done? I once took my note-book and asked certain women what they would have done; but I doubt the sincerity of the replies.»

Mrs. Darrell-King: «Naturally. A woman's first lesson is repression.»

Miss Elizabeth Whiteford Blake: «Oh, dear Mrs. King, I don't think so! Why should n't one answer honestly? There is surely but one reply to the Lady or Tiger question. Any right-minded woman would give him the—»

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Stockton's story with this title first appeared in *THE CENTURY* for November, 1882.

Mrs. Powers: «Well, I don't believe in half-way measures, anyhow. I'd give him straight to the—»

Mrs. Willie Denzell: «So should I—right straight to the—»

Miss Van Mack: «Why, any woman in her senses would say the same thing, if she answered honestly. She'd give him right to the other woman, of course.»

Simultaneous Chorus of Five: «Yes!» «Yes!» «No!» «No!» «No!»

Mrs. Darrell-King (smiles, and crochets in silence).

Miss Van Mack: «Well, really! There seems to be some diversity here, at any rate. Now, remember. I am not speaking of Mr. Stockton's one particular woman, but of what we, individually, would do if the scene could be shifted to the present.»

Miss Del Terrett (swinging lazily): «It would be awfully nice to have to do it. Just imagine how exciting to have the Casino bedecked, and Benjamin's orchestra playing waltzes, and all your dearest friends and best enemies making up box-parties, just to see one give a gesture. Why, it would be perfectly lovely. I could give him to the other woman—»

Mrs. Willie Denzell (interpolating): «And spend the rest of your life making him wish he'd never seen her.»

Miss Del Terrett: «Precisely. Or I could give him to the tiger, and be happy ever after as a woman with a melancholy history—»

Miss Van Mack: «And a well-paying lecture tour.»

Miss Del Terrett: «Of course. The managers would bid high. But if you want me to answer honestly—»

Mrs. Willie Denzell: «You might at least try, Del.»

Miss Del Terrett: «Thank you, yes. I would give the dear man to the other woman, because—»

Mrs. Willie Denzell: «You know you could get him back again.»

Miss Del Terrett (modestly): «Yes.»

Mrs. Willie Denzell: «So should I give him to the woman. But it would be to see them both eaten up afterward by the tiger, which I've no doubt was the finale if that—a—person—princess, was it?—in Mr. Stockton's story had anything to do with it.»

Chorus: «Oh!» «Oh!» «Just listen!»

Mrs. Darrell-King (quietly): «Was the caged woman beautiful?»

Mrs. Powers: «Of course. Better be dead than ugly—in a story.»

Miss Van Mack: «Here is Mrs. Hope. Let us ask her, because she is a delightful type of a happy and wholesome young woman—»

Mrs. Stanley Hope (stopping at the veranda steps): «Good morning, Mrs. King. How interested you all look!»

Miss Van Mack: «Yes, Mrs. Hope; we wish you to tell us which you would do if the scene of Mr. Stock-

ton's story were transferred to the present—give the man you love—»

*Mrs. Powers*: «Who, by the way, is charming.»

*Miss Van Mack*: «—to be eaten by the tiger rather than to be married to another woman, or vice versa? No, now; don't go! Please tell us.»

*Mrs. Stanley Hope* (on the steps, smiles and blushes): «I—oh, don't ask me. Ask some one else.»

*Chorus*: «Go on! Go on!»

*Mrs. Hope*: «I know you will think me perfectly dreadful. I suppose I *ought* to say the woman, but (moving down the steps)—but I'm sure I would give him to the tiger.» (Runs off, smiling over her shoulder.)

*Miss Elizabeth Whiteford Blake*: «How dreadful! I thought Mrs. Hope so devoted to her husband.»

*Mrs. Darrell-King*: «So she is.»

*Mrs. Powers*: «Well, now, I will answer honestly. If it were any other man I would give him to the woman. But I really think I would give Alexander to the tiger.»

*Miss Elizabeth Whiteford Blake*: «Oh, dear Mrs. Powers! No!»

*Mrs. Powers*: «It's so bad for a man to know he's tremendously in demand.»

*Miss Elizabeth Whiteford Blake*: «Oh, surely, love alone is capable of self-effacement. I'd give him to the other woman gladly, *gladly*, just because I loved him.»

*Mrs. Powers*: «Child, you are not married. I would give him to the tiger, (gladly, gladly,) for the selfsame reason.»

*Mrs. Willie Denzell* (looking at her chatelaine watch): «Luncheon!» (All move, and collect parasols, etc.)

*Miss Del Terrett*: «Mrs. King has n't expressed her opinion yet.»

*Miss Elizabeth Whiteford Blake*: «Oh, we all know what dear Mrs. King will say.»

*Miss Van Mack*: «Yes, Mrs. King shall decide this hydra-headed question. She is just the one to do it.»

*Mrs. Powers*: «Honestly, you know, Mrs. King.»

*Mrs. Darrell-King*: «It is consistent to make the man the irresponsible being, and leave the woman to solve such a question; but I should do the other thing, and test the man. I should signal to open *both* cages.»

*Mrs. Willie Denzell*: «Just as I said! Then the tiger would eat them both, and *that* episode would be closed—which is always the more desirable way, anyhow.»

*Mrs. Darrell-King*: «Not at all. The man would have an instant of time in which to choose. He must either spring into the cage with the woman to save himself from the tiger, and in so doing renounce *me*; or he would give himself to the tiger rather than marry the other woman. But the question is, which—»

*Butler* (in the doorway): «Madam, luncheon is ready.»

*Virginia Woodward Cloud.*