



Mrs. Packletide's Tiger

by

H. H. Munro (a.k.a. Saki)



It was Mrs. Packletide's pleasure and intention that she should shoot a tiger. Not that the lust to kill had suddenly descended on her, or that she felt that she would leave India safer and more wholesome than she had found it, with one fraction less of wild beast per million of inhabitants. 5 The compelling motive for her was the fact that Loona Bimberton had recently been carried eleven miles in an aeroplane by an Algerian aviator, and talked of nothing else; only a personally procured tiger-skin and a heavy harvest of Press photographs could successfully counter that sort of thing. Mrs. Packletide had already arranged in her mind the lunch she 10 would give at her house in Curzon Street, ostensibly in Loona Bimberton's honour, with a tiger-skin rug occupying most of the foreground and all of the conversation. She had also already designed in her mind the tiger-claw brooch that she was going to give Loona Bimberton on her next birthday. In a world that is supposed to be chiefly swayed by hunger and by love 15 Mrs. Packletide was an exception; her movements and motives were largely governed by dislike of Loona Bimberton.

Circumstances proved propitious. Mrs. Packletide had offered a thousand rupees for the opportunity of shooting a tiger without over-much risk or exertion, and it so happened that a neighbouring village could boast 20 of being the favoured rendezvous of an animal of respectable antecedents, which had been driven by the increasing infirmities of age to abandon game-killing and confine its appetite to the smaller domestic animals. The prospect of earning the thousand rupees had stimulated the sporting and commercial instinct of the villagers; children were posted night and day on 25 the outskirts of the local jungle to head the tiger back in the unlikely event of his attempting to roam away to fresh hunting-grounds, and the cheaper kinds of goats were left about with elaborate carelessness to keep him satisfied with his present quarters. The one great anxiety was lest he should die of old age before the date appointed for the memsahib's shoot.

30 The great night duly arrived, moonlit and cloudless. A platform had been constructed in a comfortable and conveniently placed tree, and thereon crouched Mrs. Packletide and her paid companion, Miss Mebbin. A goat, gifted with a particularly persistent bleat, such as even a partially deaf tiger might be reasonably expected to hear on a still night, was 35 tethered at the correct distance. With an accurately sighted rifle and a thumb-nail pack of patience cards the sportswoman awaited the coming of the quarry.

“I suppose we are in some danger?” said Miss Mebbin.

40 “Nonsense,” said Mrs. Packletide; “it’s a very old tiger. It couldn’t spring up here even if it wanted to.”

“If it’s an old tiger I think you ought to get it cheaper. A thousand rupees is a lot of money.”

45 Louisa Mebbin adopted a protective elder-sister attitude towards money in general, irrespective of nationality or denomination. Her speculations as to the market depreciation of tiger remnants were cut short by the appearance on the scene of the animal itself. As soon as it caught sight of the tethered goat it lay flat on the earth, seemingly less from a desire to take advantage of all available cover than for the purpose of snatching a short rest before commencing the grand attack.

50 “I believe it’s ill,” said Louisa Mebbin, loudly in Hindustani, for the benefit of the village headman, who was in ambush in a neighbouring tree.

“Hush!” said Mrs. Packletide, and at that moment the tiger commenced ambling towards his victim.

55 “Now, now!” urged Miss Mebbin with some excitement; “if he doesn’t touch the goat we needn’t pay for it.”

60 The rifle flashed out with a loud report, and the great tawny beast sprang to one side and then rolled over in the stillness of death. In a moment a crowd of excited natives had swarmed on to the scene, and their shouting speedily carried the glad news to the village. And their triumph and rejoicing found a ready echo in the heart of Mrs. Packletide; already that luncheon-party in Curzon Street seemed immeasurably nearer.

65 It was Louisa Mebbin who drew attention to the fact that the goat was in death-throes from a mortal bullet-wound, while no trace of the rifle’s deadly work could be found on the tiger. Evidently the wrong animal had been hit, and the beast of prey had succumbed to heart-failure, caused by the sudden report of the rifle, accelerated by senile decay. Mrs. Packletide was pardonably annoyed at the discovery; but, at any rate, she was the possessor of a dead tiger, and the villagers, anxious for their thousand rupees, gladly connived at the fiction that she had shot the beast. And Miss
70 Mebbin was a paid companion. Therefore did Mrs. Packletide face the cameras with a light heart.

As for Loona Bimberton, she refused to look at an illustrated paper for weeks, and her letter of thanks for the gift of a tiger-claw brooch was a model of repressed emotions. The luncheon-party she declined; there are
75 limits beyond which repressed emotions become dangerous.

From Curzon Street the tiger-skin rug travelled down to the Manor House, and it seemed a fitting and appropriate thing when Mrs. Packletide went to the County Costume Ball in the character of Diana.

“How amused everyone would be if they knew what really happened,”
80 said Louisa Mebbin a few days after the ball.

“What do you mean?” asked Mrs. Packletide quickly.

“How you shot the goat and frightened the tiger to death,” said Miss Mebbin, with her disagreeably pleasant laugh.

“No one would believe it,” said Mrs. Packletide.

85 “Loona Bimberton would,” said Miss Mebbin. Mrs. Packletide’s face settled on an unbecoming shade of greenish white.

“You surely wouldn’t give me away?” she asked.

“I’ve seen a week-end cottage near Darking that I should rather like to buy,” said Miss Mebbin with seeming irrelevance. “Six hundred and eighty,
90 freehold. Quite a bargain, only I don’t happen to have the money.”

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Louisa Mebbin’s pretty week-end cottage, christened by her “Les Fauves,” and gay in summer-time with its garden borders of tiger-lilies, is the wonder and admiration of her friends.

“It is a marvel how Louisa manages to do it,” is the general verdict.

95 Mrs. Packletide indulges in no more big-game shooting.

“The incidental expenses are so heavy,” she confides to inquiring friends.

Tasks for “Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger”

To help you understand and enjoy the story “Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger” by H. H. Munro (also known as Saki) there is a pre-reading activity and a post-reading activity.

Before you read the text do the following matching exercise. On the left there are words/phrases from the text that might be a bit hard to understand. On the right you find simpler synonyms/explanations for the more sophisticated (= elegant but difficult) expressions used.

Saki’s sophisticated English	slightly simpler English
1. a heavy harvest of Press photographs	a) a place where something/somebody likes to go
2. a particularly persistent bleat	b) what’s left of a dead tiger
3. abandon game-killing	c) rather cheap
4. accelerated by senile decay	d) pausing and relaxing for a short while
5. connived at the fiction	e) made faster because of old age
6. in the character of Diana	f) lots of media attention/publicity
7. incidental expenses	g) good/fortunate
8. propitious	h) give up hunting
9. quite a bargain	i) feelings that aren’t shown openly
10. repressed emotions	j) everybody’s opinion.
11. snatching a short rest	k) dressed up as the goddess of hunting
12. the favoured rendezvous	l) agreed on/invented the story
13. the general verdict	m) additional costs
14. tiger remnants	n) a rather loud and annoying noise

Congratulations!

Now you should be ready and able to understand the story. After reading it turn to the exercise “Did I get that right, Mrs. Packletide?” on the following pages.

Did I get that right, Mrs. Packletide?

1. Mrs. Packletide wanted to shoot a tiger because
 - ☐ she wanted to make India a safer place.
 - ☐ she suddenly felt the urge to kill (anything).
 - ☐ she wanted to be admired more than Loona Bimberton.
 - ☐ she wanted to have a tiger for lunch.
2. Loona Bimberton and Mrs. Packletide
 - ☐ were old friends.
 - ☐ had been on a plane together.
 - ☐ came from Algiers.
 - ☐ didn't like each other much.
3. Things appeared to be going very well for Mrs. Packletide because
 - ☐ it looked as though she could easily shoot a tiger.
 - ☐ she was offered a thousand rupees for a tiger-skin.
 - ☐ the risk involved would add to her fame.
 - ☐ the people in the village had only recently shot a tiger.
4. The villagers were
 - ☐ afraid of the tiger and happy that he was going to be killed.
 - ☐ very interested in helping Mrs. Packletide.
 - ☐ angry because the tiger killed their animals.
 - ☐ afraid that the tiger might die too soon.
5. The platform had been constructed for the hunt
 - ☐ so that the tiger could be shot easily.
 - ☐ and it was higher than the trees around it.
 - ☐ to enjoy the moonlit and cloudless night.
 - ☐ but the villagers hoped it would collapse.
6. There was a goat present
 - ☐ in case Mrs. Packletide and Miss Mebin should get hungry.
 - ☐ so that the ladies could play cards with it.
 - ☐ because it was part of a traditional Indian festivity.
 - ☐ that bleated in a way that even an old tiger could hear.

7. The situation was
- ☐ considered dangerous by Mrs. Packletide.
 - ☐ not dangerous because the tiger was weak and old.
 - ☐ difficult because it was too dark to see.
 - ☐ made worse because of the bleating goat.
8. Miss Mebbin wanted to talk more about the price of the tiger
- ☐ because she wanted to buy one herself.
 - ☐ and also about the price of a tiger-skin.
 - ☐ because she thought that it was quite a bargain.
 - ☐ but then the tiger came.
9. Miss Mebbin tells Mrs. Packletide to shoot quickly because
- ☐ she hopes that they wouldn't have to pay for the goat if it survived.
 - ☐ she thinks Mrs. Packletide had fallen asleep.
 - ☐ she is afraid Mrs. Packletide wouldn't kill it with just one shot.
 - ☐ she thought the tiger was about to leave.
10. With her shot Mrs. Packletide killed
- ☐ only the goat.
 - ☐ only the tiger.
 - ☐ both the tiger and the goat.
 - ☐ Miss Mebbin.
11. The villagers
- ☐ had no idea that Mrs. Packletide hadn't really shot the tiger.
 - ☐ took lots of pictures of Mrs. Packletide.
 - ☐ didn't get their thousand rupees.
 - ☐ pretended Mrs. Packletide was successful.
12. Loona Bimberton
- ☐ had a look at all the magazines with the pictures of the tiger.
 - ☐ did not want to go to Mrs. Packletide's party.
 - ☐ was very grateful for the tiger-claw brooch she received.
 - ☐ was so angry that she refused any further communication.

13. After the County Costume Ball
- ☐ the tiger-skin was sent to the Manor House.
 - ☐ people were amused about Mrs. Packletide's costume.
 - ☐ Miss Mebbin starts to blackmail Mrs. Packletide.
 - ☐ Miss Mebbin tells Loona Bimberton the true story.
14. Miss Mebbin's new week-end cottage
- ☐ was cheap enough so that she could buy it herself.
 - ☐ was given to her by Loona Bimberton as a present.
 - ☐ was admired by her friends.
 - ☐ was marvellous and a place where homosexuals met.
15. In the end Mrs. Packletide gives up big-game hunting because
- ☐ she finds it too expensive even for a rich woman.
 - ☐ she feels sorry for the poor animals.
 - ☐ she is afraid that she couldn't impress Loona Bimberton enough.
 - ☐ she has become too heavy to climb platforms in trees.

Solutions



Saki's sophisticated English	slightly simpler English
1. a heavy harvest of Press photographs f)	a) a place where something/somebody likes to go
2. a particularly persistent bleat n)	b) what's left of a dead tiger
3. abandon game-killing h)	c) rather cheap
4. accelerated by senile decay e)	d) pausing and relaxing for a short while
5. connived at the fiction l)	e) made faster because of old age
6. in the character of Diana k)	f) lots of media attention/publicity
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13. the general verdict j)	m) additional costs
14. tiger remnants b)	n) a rather loud and annoying noise

Did I get that right, Mrs. Packletide? - solutions

1. Mrs. Packletide wanted to shoot a tiger because
 - ☐ she wanted to make India a safer place.
 - ☐ she suddenly felt the urge to kill (anything).
 - ☒ **she wanted to be admired more than Loona Bimberton. (ll. 5ff)**
 - ☐ she wanted to have a tiger for lunch.
2. Loona Bimberton and Mrs. Packletide
 - ☐ were old friends.
 - ☐ had been on a plane together.
 - ☐ came from Algiers.
 - ☒ **didn't like each other much. (l. 16)**
3. Things appeared to be going very well for Mrs. Packletide because
 - ☒ **it looked as though she could easily shoot a tiger. (l. 18f)**
 - ☐ she was offered a thousand rupees for a tiger-skin.
 - ☐ the risk involved would add to her fame.
 - ☐ the people in the village had only recently shot a tiger.
4. The villagers were
 - ☐ afraid of the tiger and happy that he was going to be killed.
 - ☐ very interested in helping Mrs. Packletide.
 - ☐ angry because the tiger killed their animals.
 - ☒ **afraid that the tiger might die too soon. (l. 28f)**
5. The platform had been constructed for the hunt
 - ☒ **so that the tiger could be shot easily. (l. 31)**
 - ☐ and it was higher than the trees around it.
 - ☐ to enjoy the moonlit and cloudless night.
 - ☐ but the villagers hoped it would collapse.
6. There was a goat present
 - ☐ in case Mrs. Packletide and Miss Mebin should get hungry.
 - ☐ so that the ladies could play cards with it.
 - ☐ because it was part of a traditional Indian festivity.
 - ☒ **that bleated in a way that even an old tiger could hear. (l. 33f)**

7. The situation was

- ☐ considered dangerous by Mrs. Packletide.
- ☒ **not dangerous because the tiger was weak and old. (l. 39f)**
- ☐ difficult because it was too dark to see.
- ☐ made worse because of the bleating goat.

8. Miss Mebbin wanted to talk more about the price of the tiger

- ☐ because she wanted to buy one herself.
- ☐ and also about the price of a tiger-skin.
- ☐ because she thought that it was quite a bargain.
- ☒ **but then the tiger came. (l. 44ff)**

9. Miss Mebbin tells Mrs. Packletide to shoot quickly because

- ☒ **she hopes that they wouldn't have to pay for the goat if it survived. (l. 54f)**
- ☐ she thinks Mrs. Packletide had fallen asleep.
- ☐ she is afraid Mrs. Packletide wouldn't kill it with just one shot.
- ☐ she thought the tiger was about to leave.

10. With her shot Mrs. Packletide killed

- ☐ only the goat.
- ☐ only the tiger.
- ☒ **both the tiger and the goat. (l. 57/62f)**
- ☐ Miss Mebbin.

11. The villagers

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- ☐ took lots of pictures of Mrs. Packletide.
- ☐ didn't get their thousand rupees.
- ☒ **pretended Mrs. Packletide was successful. (l. 69)**

12. Loona Bimberton

- ☐ had a look at all the magazines with the pictures of the tiger.
- ☒ **did not want to go to Mrs. Packletide's party. (l. 74)**
- ☐ was very grateful for the tiger-claw brooch she received.
- ☐ was so angry that she refused any further communication.

13. After the County Costume Ball

- ☐ the tiger-skin was sent to the Manor House.
- ☐ people were amused about Mrs. Packletide's costume.
- ☒ **Miss Mebbin starts to blackmail Mrs. Packletide. (l. 79ff)**
- ☐ Miss Mebbin tells Loona Bimberton the true story.

14. Miss Mebbin's new week-end cottage

- ☐ was cheap enough so that she could buy it herself.
- ☐ was given to her by Loona Bimberton as a present.
- ☒ **was admired by her friends. (l. 93)**
- ☐ was marvellous and a place where homosexuals met.

15. In the end Mrs. Packletide gives up big-game hunting because

- ☒ **she finds it too expensive even for a rich woman. (l. 96)**
- ☐ she feels sorry for the poor animals.
- ☐ she is afraid that she couldn't impress Loona Bimberton enough.
- ☐ she has become too heavy to climb platforms in trees.