

Mrs. Packletide's Tiger



INTRODUCTION

formally ruled the Indian subcontinent between 1858 and 1947.

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF SAKI

Saki was born Hector Hugh Munro on December 18, 1870 to a colonial British family living in Akyab, Burma (now Sittwe, Myanmar). Saki's father, Charles Munro, was stationed as an Inspector General in Burma's military police. In 1872, during a home visit to Pilton on England's North Devon Coast, Saki's mother, Mary Munro, was charged by a cow; she miscarried her fourth child and later died after the tragic accident. Upon Charles Munro's return to Burma, Saki and his older brother and sister remained in Pilton where they were raised by their strict paternal aunts and grandmother. Saki's childhood was characterized by an intense dislike of his authoritarian aunts alongside regular bouts of illness that saw him primarily home-schooled. During Saki's late teenage years his father returned home and took the children traveling to Europe. In 1883 Saki was briefly stationed in Burma with the military police before illness sent him home. At the age of 26 he began publishing the satirical short stories that he is now best known for, while also working as a journalist and political satirist in London. He began work as a foreign correspondent for *The Morning Post* in 1882, subsequently living in Russia, the Balkans, and France, before returning to London. At age 43 he voluntarily enlisted in the British Army during World War I, where he refused a commission in the belief that soldiers should serve under officers with war-time experience. After rising to the position of corporal and then lance sergeant during his years serving in the War, he was fatally shot by a German sniper in the Battle of Ancre on November 14, 1916, and has no known grave. Throughout his adult life, Saki lived a gay but closeted experience. He is most remembered for his crisp and witty short stories that satirized middle- and upper-class Edwardian society.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Edwardian period (strictly 1901-1910 but often extended from the 1890s through to World War I) signaled a new era for Britain. Compared to the preceding conservative Victorian period, Edwardian society was characterized by heightened class divisions and relaxed codes of conduct. A growing political awareness was also taking place, particularly for women and the working class. "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger" embraces these early twentieth-century changes, with female characters inhabiting masculine spheres and Saki's ridicule of Edwardian upper-class pretension. Mrs. Packletide's characterization as an upper-class Edwardian socialite who travels to India for big-game hunting fits with historic events, for the British Raj

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

"Mrs. Packletide's Tiger" is similar in tone to Saki's other short stories that criticize the pretentiousness of Edwardian high society. It briefly features the character Clovis, the titular character who appears throughout the stories in Saki's third short story collection, *The Chronicles of Clovis*. Clovis's attitudes and behaviors are founded on the character of Reginald from Saki's previous two collections that similarly include stories parodying Edwardian high society. Saki is often compared to Dorothy Parker and O. Henry, as all three are masters of the satirical short story. Saki's entertaining and satirical style is also reminiscent of Oscar Wilde's works, including [The Importance of Being Earnest](#); Wilde and Saki coincidentally shared the same publisher, John Lane. Saki's literary style has directly influenced the works of significant authors including A. A. Milne, Noël Coward, P. G. Wodehouse and Roald Dahl.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger"
- **When Written:** Between 1908 and 1911
- **Where Written:** London, England
- **When Published:** The story was first published in 1911 as an entry in Saki's third collection of short stories, *The Chronicles of Clovis*.
- **Literary Period:** Edwardian
- **Genre:** Short story
- **Setting:** A village in India, and London, England
- **Climax:** Louisa Mebbin blackmails Mrs. Packletide by threatening to tell their peers the truth of their recent hunting excursion in India.
- **Point of View:** Third person

EXTRA CREDIT

Lions, Tigers, and Bears. Saki was far more familiar with tigers than his fictional protagonist, Mrs. Packletide—he raised a tiger cub while working as a military policeman in Burma in the 1890s.

Final Words. Several sources have reported that before his death by sniper during the World War I's Battle of the Ancre, Saki's last words were "Put that bloody cigarette out!"



PLOT SUMMARY

Mrs. Packletide longs to shoot a **tiger** in India. Her exotic fancy arises from her desperate need to best Loona Bimberton's recent flight with an Algerian aviator, and "only a personally procured tiger-skin and a heavy harvest of press photographs could successfully counter that sort of thing." Mrs. Packletide already dreams of the admiration she will gain from her London peers when she returns home with such a tale and trophy—even better is the personal satisfaction that stealing the limelight from her ultimate rival Bimberton will bring. In fact, Mrs. Packletide plans to brazenly rub her feat in her rival's face by throwing a lunch party in Bimberton's honor with the tiger-skin in pride of display, followed by the act of gifting Bimberton a **tiger-claw brooch**.

Mrs. Packletide offers a thousand rupees for the rights to shoot a tiger in India "without overmuch risk or exertion." Luckily, a village has just the opportunity, offering a hunting experience in which Mrs. Packletide can shoot an elderly, almost-tame tiger from the comfort of the village outskirts. The villagers work hard to ensure the tiger is kept within the village boundaries until Mrs. Packletide arrives for the big shoot. The tiger is so feeble, and likely unwell, that the villagers are relieved the animal stays alive until Mrs. Packletide's arrival. Louisa Mebbin, Mrs. Packletide's long-time paid companion, accompanies her for the hunt and comments loudly to the village headman about the outrageous expense Mrs. Packletide is paying for the unimpressive big-game experience. The two wait for the tiger to approach a bleating goat that is tied up as bait, both relaxing in the comfort of a tree platform.

When the tiger appears and notices the goat, it lies down in fatigue before slowly ambling towards its victim. Miss Mebbin, always the penny pincher, urges Mrs. Packletide to shoot the tiger before it eats the bait so that they don't have to pay extra money for the goat. Subsequently, when a great shot rings out from Mrs. Packletide's rifle, the tiger jumps sideways before rolling over, dead. Mrs. Packletide and the villagers are carried away with glee at the successful shot.

It is Louisa Mebbin who realizes that Mrs. Packletide has accidentally and fatally shot the goat instead of the tiger. It seems the elderly tiger has died in fright at the sound of the rifle's loud discharge. Although annoyed, Mrs. Packletide is happy to pose for trophy photographs as she pretends she has successfully shot the big cat. She is content in the knowledge that the villagers and Miss Mebbin will play along with her deception due to the money she is paying both parties.

Photos of Mrs. Packletide and her dead tiger reach newspapers as far abroad as America and Russia, while at home in London she enjoys the attention of her exploits by hosting a high-society lunch party and gifting Loona Bimberton a tiger-claw brooch as planned. The tiger-skin travels between London

houses as it is "duly inspected and admired by the county." Mrs. Packletide takes her farcical deed even further by attending a fancy-dress ball as Diana, [the Greek goddess of the hunt](#). She draws the line at fellow socialite Clovis' suggestion that she hold a "primeval dance party" in which "everyone should wear the skins of beasts they had recently slain."

A few days later, Mrs. Packletide is horrified by Louisa Mebbin's unexpected threat to expose the truth of their hunt in India. Miss Mebbin successfully blackmails Mrs. Packletide into buying her a **weekend cottage** near Dorking for six hundred and eighty pounds. Miss Mebbin names the cottage "Les Fauvres" and plants tiger-lilies around its borders; the property is the envy of all her friends. The story concludes with Mrs. Packletide's acknowledgement to her London peers that she no longer undertakes big-game hunting because "the incidental expenses are so heavy."



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Mrs. Packletide – Mrs. Packletide, the protagonist of "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger," is a frivolous and petty high-society Edwardian woman. Her behavior is primarily driven by her competitive relationship with fellow London socialite Loona Bimberton. Mrs. Packletide is determined to one-up Bimberton's exploits in flying with an Algerian aviator by undertaking an even more attention-grabbing exotic adventure. She travels to India with her paid companion, Louisa Mebbin, in order to bring back a tiger-skin. In an extraordinary feat, Mrs. Packletide misses her shot when targeting an elderly **tiger** at close range, but the pitiful creature is literally frightened to death at the rifle's loud discharge. Mrs. Packletide happily pretends she has succeeded in acquiring her trophy; but back in London, her parading of the tiger-skin at every opportunity is suddenly derailed when Louisa Mebbin threatens to tell their peers the truth of the hunt. The pretentious Mrs. Packletide receives her comeuppance in having to buy Miss Mebbin an expensive **weekend cottage** in return for Mebbin's continued silence.

Louisa Mebbin – Louisa Mebbin accompanies Mrs. Packletide to India as her long-time paid companion. Unlike the foolish socialites Mrs. Packletide and Loona Bimberton, Mebbin is a rational and thrifty character whose middle-class background has taught her to save money in all areas of life. She is constantly trying to halt Mrs. Packletide's frivolous spending, especially if she can personally recover some of the savings for her own pocket. Louisa Mebbin becomes an antagonist in "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger" when she blackmails Mrs. Packletide into buying her a **weekend cottage** near Dorking by threatening to reveal the truth of their failed **tiger** hunt in India.

Loona Bimberton – Loona Bimberton is an attention-seeking

London socialite whose sole purpose in the story is to act as a foil to Mrs. Packletide's jealous behaviors. After undertaking flight with an Algerian aviator, Bimberton is supremely jealous when Mrs. Packletide steals her limelight by supposedly shooting a **tiger** in India. Bimberton politely writes an insincere thank you note after receiving Mrs. Packletide's obnoxious gift of a **tiger-claw brooch**. However, Bimberton cannot bring herself to also attend the lunch party where Mrs. Packletide proudly displays the tiger-skin—her jealous personality cannot endure witnessing Mrs. Packletide's social coup.

Clovis – Clovis is a peer in Mrs. Packletide's London social circle who encourages her exotic desires and attention-seeking behaviors. Although a minor character in "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger," Clovis is the titular character who stars in many of the short stories in Saki's third collection, *The Chronicles of Clovis* (1911). Clovis' witty and biting character is very similar to that of Reginald, another young man-about-town who features in Saki's previous two short story collections.

The Villagers – The inhabitants of the local Indian village where Mrs. Packletide pays to shoot a harmless **tiger**. During the villagers' enthusiastic pursuit of earning a thousand rupees from Mrs. Packletide for the privilege of shooting a tiger, the village children are stationed around the village outskirts to keep the tiger within its boundaries, while village mothers stop singing lullabies to their babies as they approach their homes after daily work to ensure that they don't upset the elderly tiger's sleeping routine.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Village Headman – The village headman is perched in a tree within short distance from Mrs. Packletide and Louisa Mebbin as they lie in wait for the **tiger**. He likely overhears Miss Mebbin when she comments loudly that Mrs. Packletide has paid too much money for the hunt.

of fellow London socialite Loona Bimberton. Saki ridicules both women, but particularly Mrs. Packletide, to scorn the attitudes of upper-class Edwardian settlers and travelers at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1911, when Saki wrote the story, the British Raj had formally ruled the Indian subcontinent for more than fifty years. In this context, British colonial exploitation provides an important backdrop to "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger," in which the sparsity of Indian local life starkly contrasts the Edwardian socialites' frivolous behaviors. This contrast further calls readers' attention to Saki's critique of the vanity and shallowness of Edwardian upper-class pretension.

Readers can immediately identify the story's principal characters as foolish British high-society women. Mrs. Packletide is consumed by a desire to show off her tiger-skin at her home in London's prestigious Curzon Street, particularly reveling in boasting her exotic trophy in the face of rival socialite Loona Bimberton. Bimberton is equally obsessed with one-upping her peers and cannot face the prospect of attending Mrs. Packletide's lunch if she is not the center of admiring attention. Each of these women's names also appear silly to readers—particularly Loona Bimberton, with its embedded echoes of "loony" and "bimbo," alongside the sounds of "cackle" and "jackal" associated with Mrs. Packletide's name. From the story's outset, then, readers can picture the women as foolish, crazy, and unscrupulous characters. Saki further highlights upper-class pretensions through Mrs. Packletide's hypocritical desire to kill a tiger without any of the risk or effort of big-game hunting—instead, Mrs. Packletide waits for an elderly and almost-tame tiger to be lured within easy shot from the comfortable tree platform that villagers have specifically built for her. She pays an extravagant amount of money for this opportunity, and keeps her paid companion, Louisa Mebbin, and a deck of playing cards on hand to entertain her while she waits for her quarry. These situational factors are so far removed from the realities of an actual big-game hunt as to be ridiculous, especially when Mrs. Packletide accidentally shoots the tiger's bait, a tethered goat, instead of the tiger. The elderly tiger dies of a suspected heart attack at the loud gunshot, but the villagers are happy to pretend that Mrs. Packletide successfully shot the great cat in exchange for their payment. As soon as she is certain she can claim the tiger's death, Mrs. Packletide is vainly and excessively swept away by the imagined social prestige that will result from the false hunt: "And their [the villagers] triumph and rejoicing found a ready echo in the heart of Mrs. Packletide; already that luncheon party in Curzon Street seemed immeasurably nearer." Saki makes it clear that Mrs. Packletide cares far more about admiration from her London peers than the hunt itself.

Saki uses a backdrop of British colonialism to heighten his ridicule of Mrs. Packletide when she travels to India to exploit the nation's exotic culture and wildlife. It is Mrs. Packletide's "pleasure and intention" to kill a tiger, and she is happy to



THEMES

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EDWARDIAN UPPER-CLASS PRETENSION

In his short story "Mrs. Packletide's Tiger," Saki explores Edwardian upper-class vanity through the titular British socialite's desire to hunt a **tiger** in India. Mrs. Packletide is a frivolous woman who is obsessed with her social aspirations. In particular, she must outdo the exotic adventures

exploit Indian peoples and wildlife in her pursuit. Her attitudes reflect those of British colonists, who imposed European authority and culture on numerous nations, including India, for British gains. In the case of Mrs. Packletide, she controls wild animals using weapons and indigenous peoples using money. The absurd conditions of her hunt amplify her unethical behavior—she pays an exorbitant fee to an Indian village for rights to kill an almost-tame tiger, and then fails to accurately shoot the tiger despite its aged movements and close proximity to the comfortable platform she waits in. It is only Mrs. Packletide’s elite classist advantages, specifically her wealth, that maintain her illusion of big-game hunter. Saki’s ridicule of Edwardian socialites also demonstrates the British colonial obsession with the exotic. Beyond Mrs. Packletide’s desire to travel to India and kill a tiger for the resulting social prestige, readers learn that London socialites crave the exotic thrill of flying with Algerian aviators and attending fancy-dress balls as Roman goddesses. They demonstrate a desire to manipulate rather than understand other cultures. Saki’s implicit critique of British colonialism, then, further points to Edwardian upper-class shallowness and vanity.

Saki skewers Edwardian upper-class pretension using sharp satire and anti-colonial rhetoric. He criticizes Mrs. Packletide’s foolish behaviors and opulent spending habits, and further highlights her frivolities as maintaining British colonial traditions by exploiting Indian peoples and wildlife. Mrs. Packletide’s humorous caricature demonstrates the Edwardian upper-class’s total disregard of concern for fellow society—vanity and selfishness prevent such influential citizens from making positive social change. Indeed, Saki’s mocking portrayal of British elitism is the reason that readers applaud Mrs. Packletide’s comeuppance at the story’s conclusion.



FEMALE JEALOUSY

The three main characters of Saki’s satiric short story “Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger” all happen to be women. Mrs. Packletide, her paid companion Louisa

Mebbin, and her rival Loona Bimberton cross paths in their hometown of London, after Mrs. Packletide has taken it upon herself to travel to India with Miss Mebbin in order to kill a **tiger**. Mrs. Packletide is trying to outdo Loona Bimberton’s social popularity after the latter flew eleven miles in an airplane with an Algerian aviator. Notably, by 1911, when Saki wrote the story, social changes had popularized female defiance against a male-dominated Edwardian society. Mrs. Packletide, Loona Bimberton, and Louisa Mebbin similarly threaten conventional ideas about gender as they take on traditionally masculine roles and characteristics. However, Saki undermines this female strength through the women’s fiercely jealous behaviors that are evidenced as they wrestle to gain social power over one another. Saki’s short story therefore foregrounds female competition and jealousy as the predominant drivers of

Edwardian upper-class society.

The story’s three principal characters are women who claim some of the roles and traits traditionally associated with men. Mrs. Packletide inhabits a male world of hunting and colonial exploitation, for she pays Indian villagers to allow her the privilege of shooting an almost-tame elderly tiger that resides nearby. Loona Bimberton is similarly a woman occupying traditionally masculine roles, undertaking flight in a newly-invented airplane. Interestingly, Saki fails to mention to husbands and sons in the story—suggesting these women do not conform to traditional female roles as wives and mothers. Additionally, the women exhibit traditionally masculine behaviors and traits. Mrs. Packletide collects trophies—the tiger-skin, magazine photos, and bragging rights are all prizes of sorts. Loona Bimberton’s escapade flying in an ultra-modern airplane paints her as a dashing and bold character. Furthermore, Louisa Mebbin demonstrates the traditionally masculine tendencies of a cunning and economically-savvy mind. Readers can view all three characters as defying early twentieth-century gender norms through their intrusions into stereotypically male spheres.

However, Saki undermines the positive feminism associated with these gender-defying women by simultaneously portraying all three characters as frivolous, selfish, and unethical individuals. Rather than displaying a social conscience, Mrs. Packletide obsesses over superficial societal success that results from peer and media attention. She is a jealous and elitist Edwardian socialite who values image more than reality. She is neither intelligent nor career-minded; instead she is obsessed with keeping up with the Joneses next door. Loona Bimberton is that Jones next door, a double to Mrs. Packletide in her foolish pursuit of elite social standing. Saki contradicts her bravery in undertaking a remarkable airplane flight with her with jealous responses to Mrs. Packletide’s exploits in India. Bimberton is also an underdeveloped and superficial character, generating readers’ disrespect. Louisa Mebbin is a shrewder character than her counterparts. Readers might believe that Mebbin doesn’t play the game of competitive elitism, until the story’s conclusion, where Saki reveals Mebbin has in fact played this game most successfully by making the greatest monetary and social gain of all characters. Mebbin is therefore an intelligent and level-headed woman, but Saki still discredits her due to her dishonorably blackmailing Mrs. Packletide to acquire money. Saki litters his story with oxymorons that echo the contradiction of each female character’s behaviors—“deviation towards,” “elaborate carelessness,” “venerable herd-robber,” “beast of prey,” “immeasurably nearer,” “limits beyond which” and “disagreeably pleasant” are all such examples. These oxymorons textually reflect the absurd thematic contradictions of the three female characters’ gender reform played against their unprincipled values.

Despite displaying some positive feminist characteristics, the three principal female characters in “Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger” reveal core traits of vanity and selfishness that destroy any audience goodwill. Saki thereby satirizes female behavior, specifically mocking upper-class Edwardian women who participated in Britain’s colonial hold over India. The story’s lack of male characters serves to remove men from ridicule, foregrounding only these selfish, competitive women. By discrediting Mrs. Packletide, Loona Bimberton and Louisa Mebbin as jealous and immoral, Saki perhaps goes beyond satire to suggest that Edwardian upper-class women are dangerous and undesirable social menaces.



ANIMALS VS. HUMANS

The traditional relationship between animals and humans is flipped in Saki’s short story “Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger,” where he describes the animals as tame and the humans as wild characters. Mostly set in colonial India, the narrative is centered on Mrs. Packletide’s undertaking to kill the titular **tiger** in order to outdo fellow socialite Loona Bimberton. Bimberton has recently completed a daring and exotic trip by airplane with an Algerian aviator, but Mrs. Packletide is quite certain her triumph in personally securing a tiger-skin will become the talk of town. Through his characterization of tame animals and unkind, even beastly, humans, Saki observes that British colonists and their beneficiaries were more dangerous than the predators they hunted.

Saki describes the animals in Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger as tame in order to undermine Mrs. Packletide’s illusion of her exotic big-game hunting. Tigers are often described as fearsome and majestic beasts in literature, but here the tiger is weak and pitiful. Saki explicitly details the titular tiger as an elderly, partially deaf, and perhaps unwell creature that requires plenty of sleep. Instead of hunting wild game, the tiger eats domestic animals such as goats that it can easily find in the village. The tiger is almost domesticated itself, as the village children confine it inside the village boundaries. When it sees a goat tethered as bait, the tiger lies down—not to cleverly disguise its approach, but because it is tired. These narrative details paint the tiger as feeble and tame rather than wild and exotic. The tiger’s tamed character is also signaled by the story’s title, which foreshadows Mrs. Packletide’s transaction of one thousand rupees for her ownership of tiger killing rights. Saki further details two other compliant animals that have died at human instruction—the pitiful, persistently bleating goat that Mrs. Packletide accidentally shoots instead of the tiger, and a “miserable rabbit” that British socialite Clovis imagines killing and wearing to a fancy-dress party. Together, all of these details underscore human cruelty—or at least indifference—toward the natural world.

In contrast to the animals, Saki characterizes the principal

human characters in this story—British socialites Mrs. Packletide and Loona Bimberton and paid companion Louisa Mebbin—as disagreeable, selfish, and sometimes cruel individuals who are more beastly in behavior than the animals they seek to dominate. Saki likens Mrs. Packletide to a predator in numerous ways. Unlike the almost-tame tiger who tiredly lies down when it sees prey, Mrs. Packletide is a hunter described in active terms as she “crouched” and “awaited the coming of the quarry [the tiger].” Saki furthermore compares her to Nimrod, a biblical figure known for his skill as a hunter, and Diana, the classical Roman goddess of the hunt. Finally, a base or “animal” emotion wholly governs Mrs. Packletide’s behaviors: her jealousy of Loona Bimberton. Saki positions Loona Bimberton as a mirror image to Mrs. Packletide, as she is a similarly uncivilized character governed by animalistic selfishness and frivolity. She goes to great lengths to partake in exotic adventures—including a flight with an Algerian pilot—in order to ascend in social standing. Louisa Mebbin is the most animalistic of the women. Although a rational character, she is cruel in her conquest over Mrs. Packletide when she blackmails her into buying Mebbin a **weekend cottage**. Mebbin achieves this by ruthlessly threatening to reveal the truth of Mrs. Packletide’s false killing to London’s upper circles. The fact that Mebbin plants “tiger-lilies” at her new cottage and names it “Les Fauves,” translated as “The Wild Beasts” or “The Big Cats,” is a reminder of her triumph and an enduring statement of control over Mrs. Packletide. Louisa Mebbin therefore wounds other characters to a far greater extent than the feeble tiger.

In “Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger,” Saki flips the civilization versus savagery trope on its head when considering humans and animals. Audiences can easily recognize who is more dangerous—not the tiger as a traditionally lethal predator, but the human beings, specifically female socialites who exploit exotic environments for their own selfish ambitions.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



THE TIGER

In “Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger,” the titular tiger contains several layers of symbolic significance. Mrs. Packletide has her heart set on killing the tiger in order to attract attention from her peers through her exotic hunt—and particularly to one-up rival socialite Loona Bimberton. In literature, the tiger is frequently represented as a majestic and terrifying predator, such as the man-eating Shere Khan in Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*. Here, however, Saki describes an elderly, almost-tame tiger who dies from fright at the sound of a gunshot. Mrs. Packletide is more than happy to

sell her fake hunt—she targets a harmless tiger and then misses her shot at close range—in order to boast of her illusion of an exotic big-game hunt in India to her peers back home in London. Through this contrast between reader expectation and reality, Saki uses the tiger to reflect on colonial British travelers’ lustful and corrupt behaviors in exploiting foreign wildlife. The story’s pitiful tiger first and foremost serves to undermine Mrs. Packletide’s grand show of exotic big-game hunting. Saki also employs the tiger as a symbol that demonstrates Mrs. Packletide’s ineptitude compared to the Indian villagers’ practical resourcefulness—she cannot even shoot the elderly tiger at close range, whereas the villagers have managed to keep it confined within the village boundaries so that they can collect their thousand rupees reward from Mrs. Packletide.



THE TIGER-CLAW BROOCH

The tiger-claw brooch symbolizes the jealous and outrageous rivalry between Mrs. Packletide and Loona Bimberton, two Edwardian socialites who try to best each other for the attention of their peers. Mrs. Packletide is immensely envious of Loona Bimberton’s recent exploits in flying with an Algerian aviator, and hatches a scheme to win back public attention by hunting a **tiger** in India. Before confirming details of the hunt, Mrs. Packletide is already dreaming of a tiger-claw brooch that she will send to Loona Bimberton for her birthday—ostensibly as a gift, but in actuality a boast of Mrs. Packletide’s success in stealing the limelight from Loona Bimberton. Mrs. Packletide successfully sends her “gift,” and Saki’s tone makes it quite clear that Loona Bimberton’s “letter of thanks” is a superficial social show of good manners and a “model of repressed emotions.” The tiger-claw brooch represents exotic adventure and obscene wealth, both of which the two socialites crave. It is also a reminder of the tiger as a dangerous predatory animal, echoing the two women’s unhealthy relationship as they pretend to be friends while going to all lengths to best one another on the social scene.



THE WEEKEND COTTAGE

Louisa Mebbin successfully blackmails Mrs. Packletide into buying her a weekend cottage for six hundred and eighty pounds by threatening to tell the truth about their recent hunt in India. Mrs. Packletide chooses to pay this outrageous sum rather be disgraced in front of her peers—particularly rival socialite Loona Bimberton—if they learn she accidentally shot a goat, not a **tiger**. The weekend cottage is therefore a symbol of Louisa Mebbin’s cunning, as she bests a woman above her station to gain property and prestige. Mebbin’s not-so-subtle naming of the cottage as “Les Fauves,” meaning “The Wild Beasts” or “The Big Cats,” alongside

planting tiger-lilies about the property, is a stark reminder to Mrs. Packletide of the power Mebbin holds over her.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Pantianos Classics edition of *The Complete Short Stories of Saki* published in 2016.

Mrs. Packletide’s Tiger Quotes

●● The compelling motive for her sudden deviation towards the footsteps of Nimrod 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.

Related Characters: Loona Bimberton, Mrs. Packletide

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 85

Explanation and Analysis

In the opening paragraph, readers learn of Mrs. Packletide’s great desire to shoot a tiger in India. Her intention arises not from love of hunting or humanitarian instincts, but, as signaled in this quote, from her fierce rivalry with fellow Edwardian socialite Mrs. Loona Bimberton. Bimberton has attracted the admiration of their peers through her recent flight with an Algerian pilot, and Mrs. Packletide is convinced that she needs to shoot a tiger to steal back the spotlight. This quote is significant because it introduces the fierce competition between Mrs. Packletide and Loona Bimberton that drives their every behavior; it is also the first sentence in which Saki highlights the vanity of Edwardian upper-class pretension. He characterizes both women as ridiculous individuals who will go to any length to best one another. His phrase “sudden deviation” exposes Mrs. Packletide as a creature of whim and impulse who has financial means to back up her outrageous plans of besting Loona Bimberton’s exotic exploits.

In this quote Saki also compares Mrs. Packletide to “Nimrod” (the biblical great-grandson of Noah known as a mighty hunter) in order to further make fun of her frivolous impulses. Readers soon learn that although Mrs. Packletide will portray herself as a courageous hunter, she is a complete sham. Saki also begins to call attention to

Edwardian high society's obsession with exploiting exotic cultures—in her quest to shoot a tiger, Mrs. Packletide is not concerned about Indian wildlife and culture, merely the attention she will gain from the shoot and the accompanying photographs that will go out through print media channels.

●● The prospect of earning the thousand rupees had stimulated the sporting and commercial instincts of the local villagers; children were posted night and day on 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.

Related Characters: The Villagers, Mrs. Packletide

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 85

Explanation and Analysis

This passage acknowledges the Indian villagers' keen desire to earn a thousand rupees from Mrs. Packletide by setting up a so-called tiger hunt. It demonstrates human exploitation of animals, as the tiger is lured to its death for the villagers' financial profits and for Mrs. Packletide's social gains. It furthermore showcases human exploitation of fellow humans, since Mrs. Packletide (and by representation Edwardian high society) capitalizes on Indian culture for her own selfish ambitions of increased social prestige.

In this passage, Saki also heightens the ridiculous nature of the upcoming "hunt" due to the extreme amount of money Mrs. Packletide is paying to shoot an almost-tame tiger—this creature is not an apex predator thriving within its native jungle environment, but an elderly tiger that resides within village boundaries and eats domestic goats. The tiger is so mild that the village children are able to manage its movements day and night, successfully confining it until Mrs. Packletide's arrival for the shoot. Again, Saki makes clear the farcical nature of Mrs. Packletide's desire for a big-game hunt.

●● 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 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.

Related Characters: The Villagers, Louisa Mebbin, Mrs. Packletide

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

Here, the night of the shoot has finally arrived and Mrs. Packletide, Louisa Mebbin, and the villagers wait in anticipation for the tiger to approach the bait. Saki continues to build his satire of Mrs. Packletide through the outrageous behaviors that she exhibits during the shoot. She is no great huntress, instead having requested the comfort and ease of a tiger walking into her line of sight as she sits in a purpose-built platform on the village outskirts. She furthermore requires her paid companion and a pack of cards as entertainment during the wait. Saki's narrative details in this passage foreshadow the great hilarity that occurs when Mrs. Packletide misses her shot on the elderly tiger, despite perfect hunting conditions on a "moonlit," "cloudless" and "still" night. Saki is also careful to note that Mrs. Packletide has the use of "an accurately sighted rifle" and the bait is tethered at "the correct distance" for the easiest shot on an approaching tiger.

Despite all of the ingredients in place, Mrs. Packletide fails the shoot in spectacular fashion. This satire illustrates the story's central comment on Edwardian upper-class pretension, alongside Mrs. Packletide's shamelessness in exploiting Indian culture and wildlife. Ironically, she should be more concerned with monitoring the predatory Louisa Mebbin sitting beside her than the almost-tame tiger approaching below.

●● Louisa Mebbin adopted a protective elder-sister attitude towards money in general, irrespective of nationality or denomination.

Related Characters: Mrs. Packletide, Louisa Mebbin

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

While Mrs. Packletide and Louisa Mebbin wait for the tiger to approach the tethered goat, Miss Mebbin comments on the exorbitant fee that Mrs. Packletide is paying the villagers for the privilege of shooting “an old tiger.” In this quote that immediately follows her comment, Saki reflects on Mebbin’s “protective elder-sister attitude towards money.” Her wary safeguarding of financial assets could be explained by her socio-economic position: as a middle-class and single woman, Mebbin has to worry about money in a way that the wealthy Mrs. Packletide likely cannot comprehend. Mebbin’s livelihood as a hired companion is based on Mrs. Packletide’s patronage, and Mrs. Packletide is an impulsive creature who could change her mind about employing Mebbin at any stage.

However, Saki’s characterization of Louisa Mebbin’s protective attitude towards money goes beyond sensible regard for finances, instead portraying Mebbin as being miserly and mean of spirit. She is protective of money above all else, perhaps even above her own family, as she has adopted a sibling-like attitude to money. This quote also points to the jealous female relationships that are rife throughout the story, as sisterly ties are traditionally fraught with rivalry. In this case, Mrs. Packletide’s extreme arrogance will result in an opportunity for Louisa Mebbin to blackmail Mrs. Packletide into buying her a valuable weekend cottage, proving Louisa Mebbin’s financial cunning and her value of money above human relationships.

●● 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, where a thumping of tom-toms took up the chorus of triumph. 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.

Related Characters: Louisa Mebbin, The Villagers, Mrs. Packletide

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 86

Explanation and Analysis

This passage details the excitement that takes place upon the tiger’s death in the story. It showcases various parties’ very different interests—the villagers are thrilled to have won a significant amount of money from Mrs. Packletide upon the shoot’s success, while Mrs. Packletide is exhilarated that her visions of one-upping fellow socialite Loona Bimberton’s exotic exploits are coming true. In fact, the lunch party that Mrs. Packletide has dreamed of hosting in her home at London’s prestigious Curzon Street, for the particular purpose of lording her hunting success over Bimberton, now seems “immeasurably nearer”—a nonsensical phrase that echoes the ridiculous nature of Mrs. Packletide’s Edwardian upper-class pretension. Similarly ridiculous is the hyperbole in which Saki compares the pounding village tom-toms to Mrs. Packletide’s heartbeat.

Human interests are privileged in these numerous ways, and the loud celebrations contrast the complete lack of sadness or reverence at the tiger’s death. Louisa Mebbin is conspicuously absent from the heightened celebrations at the tiger’s death, foreshadowing her discovering that Mrs. Packletide did not hit the tiger and later her blackmailing Mrs. Packletide with the truth of the shoot.

●● Therefore did Mrs. Packletide face the cameras with a light heart, and her pictured fame reached from the pages of the “Texas Weekly-Snapshot” to the illustrated Monday supplement of the “Novoe Vremya.”

Related Characters: The Villagers, Loona Bimberton, Louisa Mebbin, Mrs. Packletide

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 86-7

Explanation and Analysis

At this point in the story, Mrs. Packletide has become aware that she shot the tethered goat instead of the approaching tiger. However, the tiger has died from fright at the sound of the loud gunshot. Mrs. Packletide is happy to pretend she

successfully shot the tiger, and feels assured that all witnesses—the villagers and Miss Mebbin—will play along, because she is paying them good money. She therefore proudly proceeds to have her picture taken with the dead tiger. Her actions demonstrate the Edwardian upper-class desire for appearance over substance, while revealing her total lack of ethics.

Mrs. Packletide’s reasons for having a “light heart” are twofold. She feels (falsely) secure in her certainty that Louisa Mebbin and the villagers will uphold her false hunt, and she is thrilled with the attention her photographs will receive from London’s upper crust, especially from the no-doubt jealous Loona Bimberton. Such behavior adds to Mrs. Packletide’s depiction as a self-assured character who believes that her money and social reputation will protect her unprincipled actions. This quote also reveals Edwardian upper-class pretension at the perceived glamour and attention of press photographs—Saki sends up Mrs. Packletide yet again by naming obscure American and Russian newspapers as the print media channels that showcase her hunting photographs.

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

Related Characters: Mrs. Packletide

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

Here, Mrs. Packletide is calling attention to her apparent hunting triumph by parading the tiger-skin as a trophy for London’s elite to ogle. That it is “duly inspected and admired by the county” suggests an Edwardian upper-class social expectation of participating in frivolous events, as well as Mrs. Packletide’s vanity in considering her trophy of interest to the entire county.

Furthermore, Mrs. Packletide’s fancy dress choice for the County Costume Ball is yet another example in the story of Edwardian high society’s obsession with exotic cultures—she dresses as Diana, the Greek goddess of the

hunt, a costume choice that can be perceived as cultural homage or appropriation. Readers can certainly view this choice as an act of extreme arrogance, for despite being a complete fraud, Mrs. Packletide has assumed the role of one of the most renowned hunters in classical literature. Her costume choice is in line with the typical pretentious behavior that Saki characterizes Edwardian high society as exhibiting.

“How amused everyone would be if they knew what really happened,” 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, her face changing colour as rapidly as though it were going through a book of patterns before post-time. “Loona Bimberton would,” said Miss Mebbin.

Related Characters: Mrs. Packletide, Louisa Mebbin (speaker), Loona Bimberton

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

In this passage, Louisa Mebbin makes her play to blackmail Mrs. Packletide by threatening to reveal the truth of the shoot in India. Mebbin’s behavior is cunning and predatory, as she waits until her threat has the biggest impact—by now press photographs, the luncheon, and the recent ball’s costume choice demonstrate Mrs. Packletide’s commitment to her false narrative of the hunt. This is the first time readers see Mrs. Packletide as being truly rattled by a turn of events. She has become a victim in a similar manner to the tiger, for she has been outplayed.

Saki uses the simile of Mrs. Packletide’s “face changing colour as rapidly as though it were going through a book of patterns before post-time” to describe her reaction to Miss Mebbin’s threat. Here Saki references the process of quickly looking through a book of owners’ racing colors at the horse races before the betting closes. Saki ridicules Edwardian high society yet again through this allusion to their frivolous wealth and pastimes, while also conveying the frenetic pace at which events are now taking place—Louisa Mebbin is moving in for the kill and Mrs. Packletide must make a choice, to lose face to her peers or

save herself by going through with Mebbin's next hint that she fancies owning a weekend cottage near Dorking. Despite the outrageous price, Mrs. Packletide will choose to pay for the cottage rather reveal the truth of her failed shoot—this becomes an easy decision when she imagines Loona Bimberton finding out the truth of the hunt. This passage reinforces the pattern of female rivalry that drives Mrs. Packletide's, Loona Bimberton's and Louisa Mebbin's behaviors in the story.

☛☛ 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.

Related Characters: Mrs. Packletide, Louisa Mebbin

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

This sentence reveals that Mrs. Packletide has given in to Louisa Mebbin's blackmail, buying her the weekend cottage near Dorking that Mebbin explicitly desires. The cottage is pretty and charming, despite being claimed through deception and blackmail. Therefore it is symbolic of the female rivalry and social desires that drive the narrative. Mebbin's decision to plant tiger-lilies in the garden and to name the cottage "Les Fauves" (translated as "The Wild Beasts" or "The Big Cats") is a ruthless reminder of the power she holds over Mrs. Packletide. The cottage's French name is also another example of the Edwardian tendency towards claiming the exotic.

Louisa Mebbin's behavior now mirrors the Edwardian upper-class pretension and female competition that she has been observing for years as Mrs. Packletide's paid companion. It turns out that Miss Mebbin is the most cunning social climber of all the story's characters, and her

actions are animalistic in the way that she ruthlessly takes down her employer Mrs. Packletide.

☛☛ Mrs. Packletide indulges in no more big-game shooting. "The incidental expenses are so heavy," she confides to inquiring friends.

Related Characters: Mrs. Packletide (speaker), Loona Bimberton, Louisa Mebbin

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols:   

Page Number: 87

Explanation and Analysis

In the story's final lines, Mrs. Packletide only partially adheres to the truth about why she no longer partakes in big-game shooting. Saki punches home his satire of Edwardian upper-class pretension as Mrs. Packletide will not reveal that she has shockingly been bested by her hired companion Miss Mebbin, merely explaining this cost under the vague notion of "incidental expenses."

The story's conclusion is also the first time readers observe that Mrs. Packletide's wealth is not limitless. The shoot in India has been a costly event—including travel to the Indian Subcontinent, payments to the villagers for rights to shoot the tiger, wages to Louisa Mebbin as a hired companion, hosting high society lunch parties, sending an elaborate tiger-claw brooch to Loona Bimberton, and most significantly the cost of buying Louisa Mebbin's weekend cottage. These final lines again show the sham of Edwardian upper-class pretension, in this case resulting from female socialites' competition to gain their peers' attention and admiration. The ultimate irony is that Mrs. Packletide never did indulge in big-game shooting—she has always been an imposter, but Mrs. Packletide and Louisa Mebbin get away with their lies due to the Edwardian upper-class impulse of valuing appearance over reality.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

MRS. PACKLETIDE'S TIGER

Mrs. Packletide wants to shoot a **tiger**. She is thrilled not at the idea of the hunt itself, but for the opportunity it provides to best her rival, Loona Bimberton. Loona has recently gained the attention of London's high society after flying eleven miles in an airplane with an Algerian pilot. Mrs. Packletide is quite certain that she requires "a personally procured tiger-skin and a heavy harvest of press photographs" to steal the social limelight.

Mrs. Packletide can already imagine flaunting her success to London's upper crust—she will host a luncheon, supposedly in Loona Bimberton's honor, where her proudly displayed tiger-skin will be the talk of the party. Mrs. Packletide is even more gleeful as she considers sending a **tiger-claw brooch** to Loona Bimberton in order to drive home her social triumph. Mrs. Packletide's every behavior can be attributed to her fierce animosity toward Loona Bimberton.

After offering a thousand rupees for the opportunity to shoot a **tiger** in India "without overmuch risk or exertion," Mrs. Packletide is fortunate to find a village that offers an elderly and almost-tame tiger for the hunt. The tiger is no longer able to bring down wild game, instead preferring to prey on domestic animals, such as goats.

The villagers are enthused by the promise of one thousand rupees and take care to ensure the **tiger** is kept within the village boundaries. Children keep watch at all hours to scare the big cat back if it tries to enter the jungle, and the villagers leave goats as easy meals for the tiger to consume. However, their most pressing concern is keeping the elderly creature alive until Mrs. Packletide arrives for the hunt—in order to let the pitiful tiger sleep peacefully, everybody goes about their daily life quietly.

Mrs. Packletide's character is primarily driven by the jealousy she feels towards fellow socialite, Loona Bimberton, who has recently gained the admiration of their London peers due to a remarkable airplane ride. Mrs. Packletide's conviction that she needs to shoot a tiger to outdo Bimberton demonstrates the Edwardian upper-class tendency to exploit exotic cultures for selfish personal desires. Through Mrs. Packletide's desire for numerous press photographs depicting her shoot, Saki also encapsulates Edwardian high society's obsession with superficial appearance.



Saki undermines Mrs. Packletide's character through her unscrupulous glee at imagining the social takedown of her rival Loona Bimberton. He paints Mrs. Packletide as almost animalistic in her satisfaction at the prospect of sending a special gift to Bimberton to ruthlessly emphasize her social triumph in stealing the limelight from her rival. Mrs. Packletide's luncheon, supposedly for Bimberton, again calls attention to Edwardian high society's vanity and artifice.



Saki ridicules Mrs. Packletide in her request to hunt a tiger without much risk or effort—the very opposite of the bravery that traditional big-game hunting signals. The tiger that the villagers offer for her to shoot is no apex predator, instead a meek creature that can no longer hunt wild game. The humans are more beastly in their cruel desires than the tamed animals the story describes.



The tiger's frail existence is highlighted through the villagers' fears that it will not live the few days until Mrs. Packletide arrives for the hunt. Saki again calls attention to the hierarchical relationship between humans and animals—while the villagers plot to manage the tiger until it can be shot by a paying customer, this tiger is not a danger to humankind. Mrs. Packletide's promised payment, an exorbitant fee, highlights the absurdity of Edwardian upper-class pretension in desiring to travel the globe for a fictional experience.



The night of the shoot arrives, “moonlit and cloudless.” Mrs. Packletide and her paid companion, Louisa Mebbin, have arrived in the village and are waiting for the **tiger** in a comfortable tree platform with an “accurately sighted rifle” and “a thumbnail pack of patience cards.” The villagers have tied up a goat at the best distance for the easiest shot at the tiger—they have chosen this specific goat because it bleats so persistently that “even a partially deaf tiger might be reasonably expected to hear [it] on a still night.”

Louisa Mebbin suggests that the two women might be in some danger. She states this not believing it to be fact, but rather due to her “morbid dread” of being underpaid for her work. Upon Mrs. Packletide’s reply that the **tiger** is too old to reach them in the tree, Miss Mebbin exclaims that Mrs. Packletide is paying too much to hunt an elderly tiger. This statement matches Mebbin’s “protective elder-sister attitude towards money in general,” for she has always been thrifty with finances no matter what the situation or monetary denomination.

A sighting of the **tiger** cuts short Louisa Mebbin’s musings on money. Upon seeing the goat, the tiger lies down—apparently needing a rest rather than trying to hide from its prey. Miss Mebbin loudly exclaims in Hindustani that she thinks it is ill, directing her comment to the nearby village headman. The tiger then “ambles” toward the goat. Miss Mebbin shouts at Mrs. Packletide to shoot the tiger quickly, for “if he doesn’t touch the goat we needn’t pay for it!”

Mrs. Packletide fires a loud shot from the rifle, and the **tiger** jumps in the air before rolling over, dead. A crowd of villagers rush the scene and excitedly yell the good news back to the village. Their shouting and drumming matches Mrs. Packletide’s thrill at killing the tiger—“already that luncheon in Curzon Street seemed immeasurably nearer.”

Saki increases the total contradiction between traditional big-game hunting and Mrs. Packletide’s shoot, for Mrs. Packletide keeps entertainment on hand while she waits for the tiger. The perfect recipe of ideal weather and a ridiculously easy target foreshadows the humorous event of Mrs. Packletide’s failed shot. Again, Saki depicts the tiger as pitiful to contrast its almost-tame nature against the expected aggressive behaviors of a big-game quarry.



While Mrs. Packletide seems to lack any concerns about her finances, Louisa Mebbin reveals her life’s priority in obtaining money. These contrasting attitudes demonstrate the women’s different backgrounds—Mrs. Packletide is a member of the Edwardian upper class and has presumably always enjoyed a frivolous lifestyle, while Miss Mebbin is a middle-class and single woman who depends on Mrs. Packletide for her income. Louisa Mebbin’s insistence that Mrs. Packletide is paying too much to shoot the tiger foreshadows Mebbin’s later blackmail of Mrs. Packletide for a significant sum in return for remaining silent about the truth of Mrs. Packletide’s failed tiger hunt.



From the tiger’s fatigued and slow movements, to Louisa Mebbin’s exuberant cries as she tries to cut a better financial deal for Mrs. Packletide, Saki continues to craft a hilarious scene of the so-called big-game hunt. Due to Miss Mebbin’s comments to the village headman in Hindustani, readers can presume that village scenes take place in northwestern India.



Upon the tiger’s death, the villagers are ecstatic, for they will receive a large payment from Mrs. Packletide. She has now successfully exploited Indian culture and wildlife, showing no remorse or acknowledgement of the tiger’s death except that her imagined lunch party is now in tantalizing reach. The event will signify Mrs. Packletide’s success in defeating Loona Bimberton on the London social circuit. Once again Saki satirizes the vanity of Mrs. Packletide and Edwardian upper class that she represents.



It is Louisa Mebbin who realizes that Mrs. Packletide has accidentally shot the goat instead of the **tiger**, for the goat thrashes near death with a visible bullet hole while the big cat lies dead with no wound to be seen. The tiger has likely been killed from heart failure in shock at the rifle's loud discharge. Mrs. Packletide is "pardonably annoyed at the discovery," but feels secure in the knowledge that her payments mean that the villagers and Louisa Mebbin will go along with her fictitious story of successfully shooting the tiger. She duly takes photographs with the big cat, that later appear in foreign illustrated newspapers such as the "Texas Weekly Snapshot" and "Novoe Vremya."

Upon Mrs. Packletide's return to London, Loona Bimberton cannot bear to look at illustrated newspapers for weeks. Bimberton sends an insincere letter of thanks upon receiving the gift of a **tiger-claw brooch**; she declines to attend Mrs. Packletide's lunch party.

Mrs. Packletide sends the tiger-skin from house to house in London, where it is "duly inspected and admired by the county." She also attends a fancy dress ball in the character of Diana (the Greek goddess of the hunt), where she mingles with a fellow socialite named Clovis. She ignores Clovis's "tempting suggestion of a primeval dance party" where guests would wear the trophy hides of animals they have slain. Clovis laments that he would only be able to clothe himself in "a miserable rabbit-skin or two," although notes this would suit his attractive figure while steering "a rather malicious glance at Diana's proportions."

A few days after the ball, Louisa Mebbin shocks Mrs. Packletide when she threatens to reveal the truth of their fabricated hunt to Loona Bimberton and Mrs. Packletide's London peers—the truth that Mrs. Packletide "shot the goat and frightened the **tiger** to death." Mrs. Packletide's complexion changes color rapidly, finally settling on "an unbecoming shade of greenish white" at Miss Mebbin's shocking blackmail and her "disagreeably pleasant laugh." Mebbin casually announces that there is a **weekend cottage** near Dorking that she fancies, although she does not have the six hundred and eighty pound purchase price required.

Despite having every possible element in her favor, Mrs. Packletide accidentally shoots the tethered goat. The tiger's simultaneous death by fright is so absurd as to be farcical. Mrs. Packletide's obsession with taking photographs of her staged kill to gain the admiration of her Edwardian upper-class peers sees her carelessly assume that her money is enough to get all of the witnesses on board with her fictitious story of a successful shoot; Louisa Mebbin's involvement will later come back to cost Mrs. Packletide dearly. Saki satirizes Mrs. Packletide once again through his note that her hunting photographs reach the pages of insignificant media channels in America and Russia.



The fiercely competitive history between Mrs. Packletide and Loona Bimberton makes it difficult for Bimberton to pretend to enjoy Mrs. Packletide's exotic successes. Mrs. Packletide rubs it in by gifting Bimberton with a tiger-claw brooch that is meant to remind her of Mrs. Packletide's hunting and social triumphs. Their interactions reflect the shallowness of both women, as well as the frivolity of the Edwardian upper-crust society they desperately seek approval from.



The tiger is Mrs. Packletide's ticket to winning the admiration of her fellow Edwardian peers, and she revels in promoting her exotic exploits at every opportunity. Clovis demonstrates spiteful tendencies that figure prominently in the female rivalries between Mrs. Packletide, Loona Bimberton, and Louisa Mebbin. Through Mrs. Packletide's brazen choice to imply she has the Greek goddess Diana's hunting prowess, and Clovis's suggestion of a "primeval dance party" for the Edwardian elite, Saki satirizes Edwardian upper-class social propriety as absurd.



Louisa Mebbin's casually pleasant demeanor is a front for a brutal, almost animalistic take down of her employer. Saki reveals Mebbin as the social competitor that Mrs. Packletide has on all occasions overlooked. His extreme satire of Mrs. Packletide throughout the story results in this highly enjoyable blackmail scene. Mrs. Packletide is so shocked that she cannot hide her facial reactions of horror in response to Mebbin's threat to disclose her vanity and lies to the London social circuit.



Louisa Mebbin's friends admire her new **weekend cottage**, named "Les Fauves" and so "gay in summer-time with its garden borders of tiger-lilies." They marvel at the mystery of "how Louisa manages to do it." Meanwhile, when Mrs. Packletide's peers ask about her future big-game hunting exploits, Mrs. Packletide replies that she no longer partakes in this pastime, as the incidental expenses are too great.

The final scene adds further elements of farce to the story, with the cottage's flowers and name—translated as "The Wild Beasts" or "The Big Cats"—reminding Mrs. Packletide of her fraudulent big-game hunt in India. The weekend cottage becomes a symbol of Louisa Mebbin's triumph over Mrs. Packletide in a parallel move to Mrs. Packletide's gift of the tiger-claw brooch to demonstrate her victory over Loona Bimberton. Saki totally undermines Edwardian upper-class culture by characterizing all three women as unprincipled and ruthless creatures who will do anything for social gain.





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