

# The Story-teller

Class 4  
English



It was a hot afternoon, and the railway carriage was sultry. The occupants of the carriage were a small girl, another smaller girl, and a small boy. An aunt belonging to the children occupied one corner seat, and the further corner seat on the opposite side was occupied by a bachelor who was a stranger to their party. Both the aunt and the children were conversational in a limited, persistent way, reminding one of the attentions of a housefly that refuses to be discouraged. Most of the aunt's remarks seemed to begin with "Don't?" The bachelor said nothing. "Don't, Cyril, don't !"



exclaimed the aunt, as the small boy began smacking the cushions of the seat, producing a cloud of dust at each blow.  
“Come and look out of the window,” she added.



The child moved reluctantly to the window. "Why are those sheep being driven out of that field?" he asked.





“I expect they are being driven to another field where there is more grass,” said the aunt weakly.



“But there is lots of grass in that field,” protested the boy; “there’s nothing else but grass there. Aunt, there’s lots of grass in that field.”



“Perhaps the grass in the other field is better,” suggested the aunt.  
“Why is it better?” came the swift, inevitable question.  
“Why is the grass in the other field better?” persisted Cyril.  
“Come over here and listen to a story,” said the aunt.





The children moved listlessly towards the aunt's end of the carriage. In a low, confidential voice, interrupted at frequent intervals by loud questionings from her listeners, she began an uninteresting story about a little girl who was good, and made friends with every one on account of her goodness, and was finally saved from a mad bull by a number of rescuers who admired her moral character.

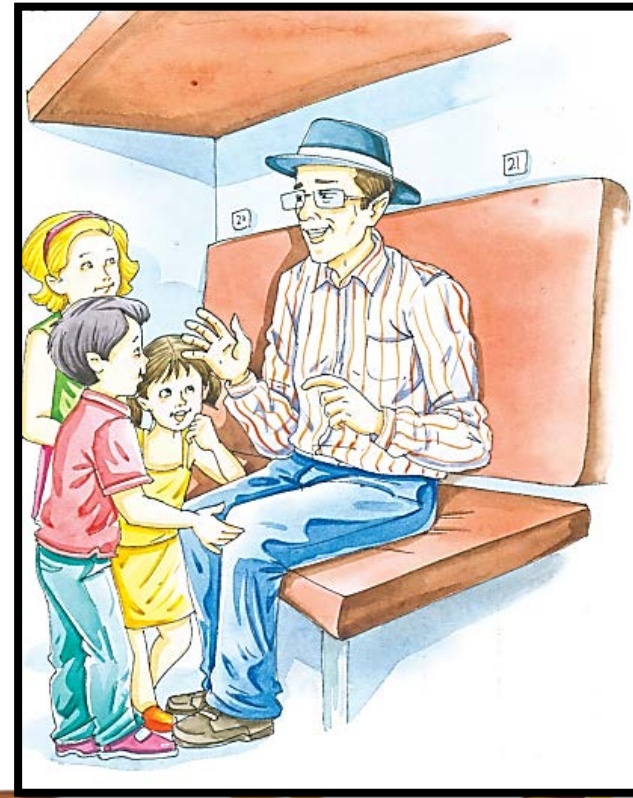




don't think they would have run quite so fast to her help if they had not liked her so much."

"It's the most stupid story I've ever heard," said the bigger of the two small girls.

"I didn't listen after the first bit," said Cyril.



“You don’t seem to be a success as a story-teller,” said the bachelor suddenly from his corner.

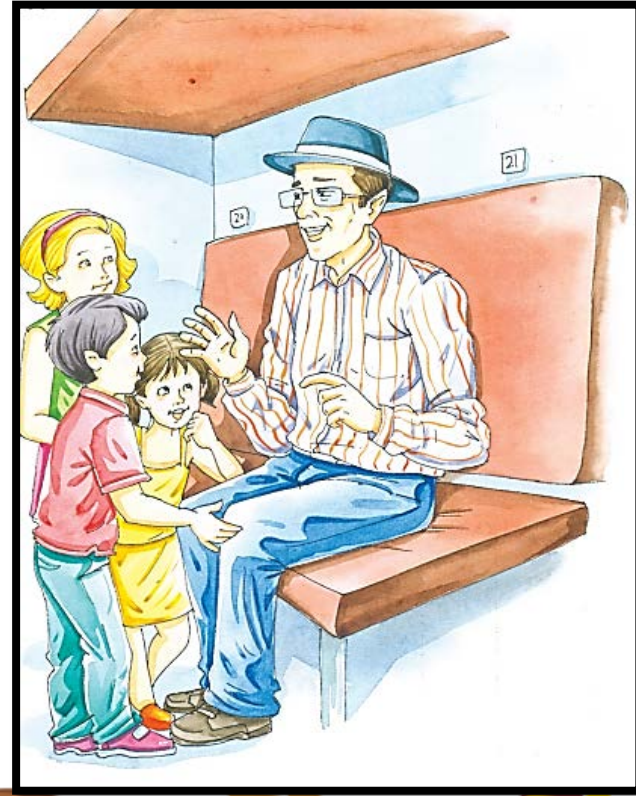
“It’s a very difficult thing to tell stories that children can both understand and appreciate,” she said stiffly.

“I don’t agree with you,” said the bachelor.





“Perhaps you would like to tell them a story,” was the aunt’s retort.  
“Tell us a story,” demanded the bigger of the small girls.  
“Once upon a time,” began the





bachelor, "there was a little girl called Bertha, who was extraordinarily good."

"She did all that she was told, she was always truthful, she kept her clothes clean, learned her lessons perfectly, and was polite in her manners."

"Was she pretty?" asked the bigger of the small girls.

"Not as pretty as any of you," said the bachelor, "but she was horribly good."



There was a wave of reaction in favour of the story; the word horrible in connection with goodness was a novelty, which seemed to be absent from the aunt's tales.

"She was so good," continued the bachelor, "that she won several medals for goodness, which she always wore pinned on to her dress. There was a medal for obedience, another medal for punctuality, and a third for good behaviour. They were large metal medals and they clicked against one another as she walked.



“Everybody talked about her goodness. The Prince of the country got to hear about it. He said that she was so very good she might be allowed once a week to walk in his park, which was just outside the town. It was a beautiful park, and no children were ever allowed in it. It was a great honour for Bertha to be allowed to go there.”

“Were there any sheep in the park?” demanded Cyril.

“No,” said the bachelor, “there were no sheep.”





“Why weren’t there any sheep?” came the inevitable question.

“There were no sheep in the park,” said the bachelor, because the Prince’s mother had once had a dream that her son would either be killed by a sheep or else by a clock falling on him. For that reason the Prince never kept a sheep in his park or a clock in his palace.”

The aunt suppressed a gasp of admiration.



“Was the Prince killed by a sheep or by a clock?” asked Cyril.

“He is still alive, so we can’t tell whether the dream will come true,” said the bachelor unconcernedly, “anyway, there were no sheep in the park, but there were lots of little pigs running all over the place.”

“What colour were they?”



“Black with white faces, white with black spots, black all over, grey with white patches, and some were white all over.”

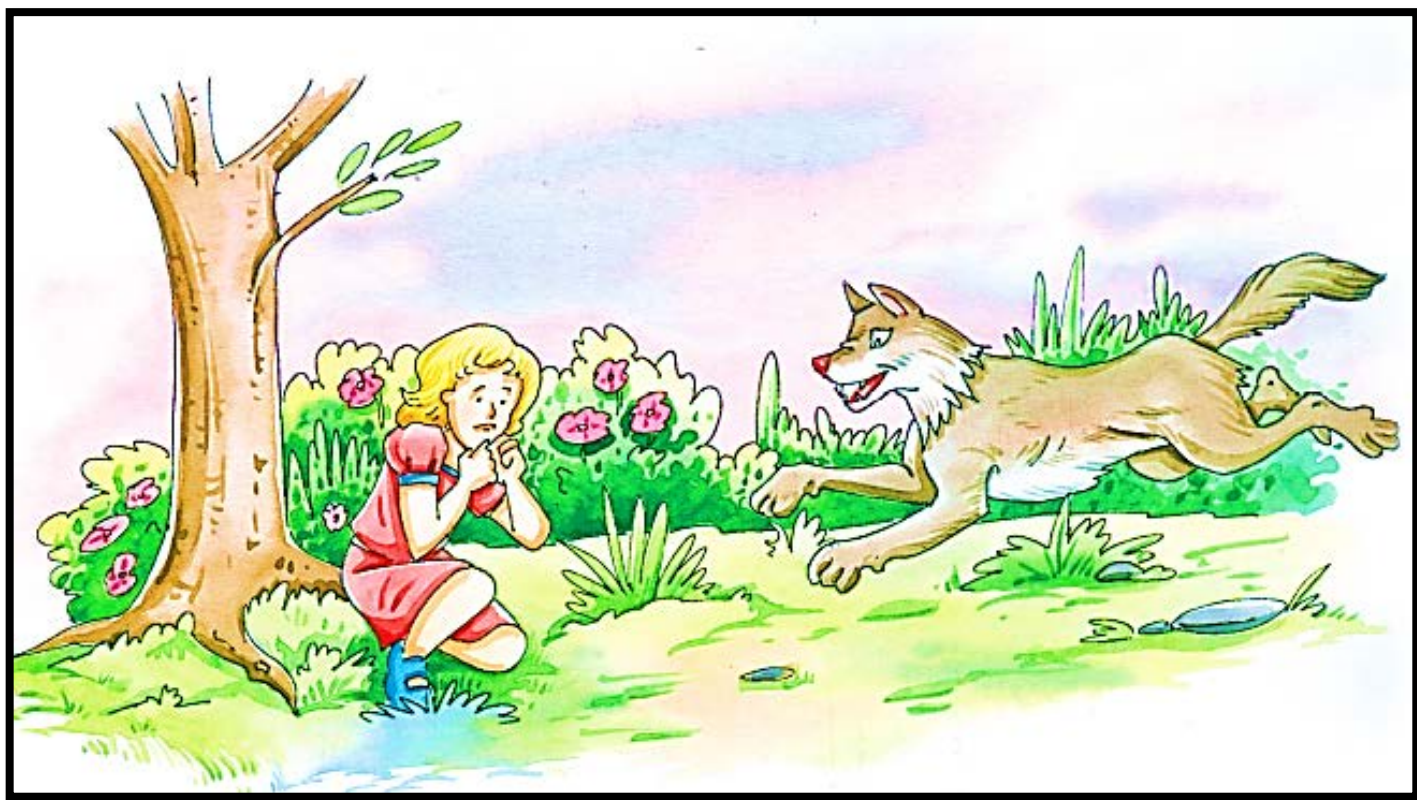
“Bertha was sorry to find that there were no flowers in the park”.

“Why weren’t there any flowers?”

“Because the pigs had eaten them all,” said the bachelor promptly. “The gardeners had told the Prince that he couldn’t have pigs and flowers, so he decided to have pigs







and no flowers.”

There was a murmur of approval at the excellence of the Prince’s decision; so many people would have decided the other way.

“There were lots of other delightful things in the park. There were ponds with gold, blue and green fish in them, trees with beautiful parrots that said clever things at a moment’s notice and humming birds that hummed all the popular tunes of the day. Bertha walked up and down and enjoyed herself immensely, and thought to herself:



‘If I were not so extraordinarily good I should not have been allowed to come into this beautiful park and enjoy all that there is to be seen in it.’ Her three medals clinked against one another as she walked and helped to remind her how very good she really was. Just then an enormous wolf came prowling into the park to see if it could catch a fat little pig for its supper.”

“What colour was it?” asked the children, amid an immediate quickening of interest.





“Mud-colour all over, with a black tongue and pale grey eyes that gleamed with unspeakable ferocity. The first thing that it saw in the park was Bertha. Bertha saw the wolf and saw that it was stealing towards her, and she began to wish that she had never been allowed to come into the park. She ran as hard as she could, and the wolf came after her with huge leaps and bounds. She managed to reach the myrtle bushes. She hid herself in one of the thickest of the bushes. The wolf came sniffing







among the branches. Its black tongue was lolling out of its mouth. Its pale grey eyes were glaring with rage.

“Bertha was trembling very much at having the wolf prowling. Obedience clinked against the medals for good conduct and punctuality.”

“The prince, who had come to meet Bertha, heard the sound of the medals clinking and stopped to listen; they clinked in a bush quite near him,” interrupted the aunt.



“The prince with his bow and arrow killed the wolf in one shot and Bertha was saved. The three medals of goodness saved her life,” said the aunt hurriedly.  
“Were any of the pigs killed?”





“No, they all escaped.”

“It is the most beautiful story I have ever heard,” said the bachelor.

“I wanted to give the story an improper end, thank you for making it the most beautiful story,” said the bachelor, collecting his belonging.

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# Thank You

