

1.2 'The Storyteller'

- H. H. Munro Saki

Q : Discuss the theme of the story 'The Storyteller'.

Ans : The theme of the story 'The Storyteller' is the psychology and nature of children. Children are restless by nature. They cannot sit idly¹. They must be doing one thing or the other. Thus the aunt, who was travelling with three children, had to tell them again and again 'Don't do this. Don't do that'. But they did not listen.

The children are also inquisitive² and always ask questions of all types. If anybody tries to satisfy them with false answers, they ask more questions. The aunt asked the children to look out of the window in the train to make them busy. A child asked her why the cows in a field were being driven out to another field. The aunt said perhaps the grass in the other field was better. But it did not satisfy the child. He asked why the grass in the other field was better. He asked still more difficult questions.

Children are not interested in stories which teach morals³. They are interested in stories which appeal to their imagination and also have a touch of reality. The aunt in the train related the children a story about a good girl who was rewarded for her goodness. They did not like the story. But they were very much attracted by the bachelor's story in which a good girl Bertha suffered for her goodness instead of being rewarded.

The bachelor was travelling in the same compartment of the train in which the aunt and the children were travelling. He invented the story to hold the attention of the children.

Bertha was 'horribly' good. She had won several medals for her goodness. She had one medal for obedience, another medal for punctuality, and a third medal for good behaviour. She always wore these medals pinned onto her dress. They were large metal medals. They clinked against one another as she walked. The Prince of the country heard about Bertha's goodness. He allowed her to walk in his park once a week. It was a beautiful park. But there were lots of little pigs in it. There were no flowers in the park because the pigs had eaten them all. One day a big wolf came to catch a fat little pig for his meal. He happened to see Bertha and ran after her. Bertha hid herself in a thick bush. The wolf was unable to find her. But just when he was moving away, he heard the clinking of Bertha's medals. Bertha was trembling with fear. He dashed⁴ into the bush, dragged Bertha out and devoured⁵ her up.

¹ **idly** - lazily; casually; carelessly.

² **inquisitive** - questioning; curious to know so much.

³ **morals** - lessons; messages; principles; moralities.

⁴ **dashed** - rushed; hurried; ran.

⁵ **devoured** - ate; gulped; gobbled.

The children were fascinated by the story. For the first time they had heard a story about a good girl who suffered for her goodness. The aunt said that it was an improper story to be told to children. But the bachelor replied that his story at least kept the children silent for ten minutes.

The technique of 'The Storyteller' is very interesting, because there is a story within the story.

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