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J. W. Searson

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STORY TELLING AND THE CHILD'S LIBRARY

By J. W. Searson

"Tell me a story, mamma! Please tell me a story!"

Every child is hungry for good stories. Stories full of action, and life, and interest charm the child. They help him naturally to enter the larger world of grown-ups, to him the "land of the merry heart".

"Where can I get good stories for children?" Every mother thinks this, and wonders how she can answer her child's simple request. Just think of it - a story! And the child at bedtime will be satisfied with a good one! We spend many dollars to give our children things of little value to them. Why not take a little time and put into their hungry hearts a good story that will increase in its charm as the child grows to manhood or womanhood? The baubles that money can buy are as nothing to a child compared with the secret delights hidden in the tale or story that sparkles with human interest.

What Stories to Tell Children

Here is the one big test to apply to every children's story: Will the story interest and charm the child now and continue to grow in interest and charm, the longer he lives? Stories which do not meet this test are mere playthings, poor ones at that. Even the Mother Goose rhymes which appeal to children thru rhyme and jingle and action and grotesque situations, are equally charming to grown-ups who keep them for their strange wisdom.

"Hickory, dickory, dock
The mouse ran up the clock,
The clock struck one and down he run,
Hickory, dickory, dock!"

Aside from the rhyme and jingle, hasn't this a strange appeal? We wonder, sometimes, if it isn't about us. Maybe we, too, like the mouse, once started to climb and became frightened at, or discouraged by, some trifle. Then, we settled down to the dead level where we now are.

Well, anyway all these good rhymes, jingles, stories, myths, legends, and fairy tales are fully as charming to the grown-up as to the prattler who first lisps, "Tell me a story, mamma!" Tell the children the old familiar rhymes and fables. Tell them the stories their parents have loved. What grown-up does not remember the story of Tom Thumb, the rhyme of The House That Jack Built, the charming story of Little Red Riding Hood, the story of the Three Bears, the ever appealing Story of Cinderella! These and hundreds of others children and grown-ups love should be made the cherished possessions of every child.

How To Tell a Story Well

First, be sure the story is worth while. Tell it with enthusiasm springing from your own love of the story. Then stress the action, and speech, and lively movement of the story. If the story has mystery in it, all the better. Tell it plainly, simply, making it move rapidly, with quick changes and variations,

and surprising situations, ever keeping the story within easy range of the child's interests and experiences. Use simple language, and draw clear word pictures. Here is a specimen story that every child loves. It opens a chink thru which the child can peep into a good world, his world, the "world of the merry heart." This is a story teller's charming version of Laura E. Richards'-

The Golden Windows

Once upon a time, there was a little boy who worked hard all day in field and barn and shed.

At sunset, when his work was all done, the little boy used to go to the top of a hill near his home, and look away across at another hill. On this far-off hill stood a house with gold and diamond windows. The yellow gold seemed as clear as glass, and the diamonds were as bright as the sun.

But it seemed to him as if some one always closed the shutters just at sunset, and covered the beautiful windows from his sight. Then the little boy would go home saying to himself, "I wish I could live in a house with golden windows".

One morning the little boy's father called him and said, "You have been a good boy. You have done your work. You may have a holiday. But remember this is your day and you should try to learn some good thing."

Then the little boy thanked his father, and kissed his mother. He put a piece of bread in his pocket, and started off to find the house with the golden windows.

His bare feet made tracks in the white dust, and when he looked back the footprints seemed to be following him and making company for him. His shadow, too, kept beside him, and would dance or run as he pleased. He was very happy.

By and by the little boy was hungry. So he sat down by a brook that ran along by the roadside, and ate his bread and drank the clear water. He scattered crumbs for the birds and then went on to find the house with the golden windows.

By and by, the little boy came to a high, green hill. There, on the top of the hill, was the house he had come to find. At first he thought the shutters were closed, for he could not see the golden windows. Then he went on until he was near the house. Then, he could have wept, for there were no shutters, and the windows were of clear glass, just like any others.

"What do you want, little boy", asked a kind woman who came to the door.

"Last evening I saw your beautiful golden windows from our hill-top", said the little boy, "And I came here to see them".

"We are poor people", she said, "and there is no gold about our windows. Besides, glass is better than gold to see thru."

She asked the little boy to sit down on the doorstep, and she brought him a cup of milk and a cake. Then she called her little girl, and, leaving the two children together, she went back to her work.

The little girl wore a brown cotton dress, but her hair was golden, like the windows he had seen, and her eyes were blue, like the sky at noon.

She led the little boy about the farm, and showed him her black calf with a white star on its forehead. He told her about his own calf at home, which had four white feet, and was red like a chestnut. After they had played for a long time, the little boy asked her about the golden windows.

"You have taken the wrong way," she said, "come with me, and I will show you the house with the beautiful windows."

They went to a hill that rose behind the farm house. As they walked along, the little girl told the little boy that the golden windows could be seen only at sunset.

"Yes, I have known that for a long time," said the little boy.

Just as the sun was going down the little girl turned and pointed. There, on a hill far away, stood a house with windows of gold and diamonds. And when the little boy looked, he saw that the house was his own home.

Then he told the little girl that he could stay no longer. He said "goodby" and gave her a white pebble with a red band, and she gave him three horse chestnuts.

Then he went down the hill, and the little girl stood in the sunset light and watched him.

The way home was long and it was dark before the little boy reached his father's house.

"Have you had a good day?" asked his father.

"Yes, indeed," he answered, "I have had a very good day."

"And have you learned anything?"

"Oh, yes," said the little boy. "I have learned that the house I live in has windows of gold and diamonds."

This story well told is asked for again and again. In fact, no mother should feel that her story is good or well told unless the bright-eyed little prattlers with eagerness exclaim, "Tell it again." It is the story that may be told over and over again ever with increasing delight that is, after all, the best story for children, the best story for all. A glimpse of the best old and new good stories for children may be had in the following story collections made by America's foremost story-tellers for children.

Some Good Story Books for Mothers

Laura E. Richards. Five Minute Stories. The Page Company.
Laura E. Richards. Three Minute Stories. The Page Company.
Maud Lindsay. Mother Stories. Milton Bradley Company.
Maud Lindsay. More Mother Stories. Milton Bradley Company.
Elizabeth Harrison. In Story-land. National Kindergarten College, Chicago.
Emilie Poulsson. In the Child's World. Milton Bradley Co.

Sara Cone Bryant. Best Stories to Tell Children. Houghton Mifflin Company.
 Sara Cone Bryant. How to Tell Stories to Children. Houghton Mifflin Company.
 Frances Weld Danielson. Story Telling Time. The Pilgrim Press.
 Frances Weld Danielson. Little Animal Stories. The Pilgrim Press.
 Carolyn Sherwin Bailey. For the Children's Hour. Milton Bradley Company
 Carolyn Sherwin Bailey. Firelight Stories. Milton Bradley Co.
 Carolyn Sherwin Bailey. Tell Me Another Story. Milton Bradley Co.
 Carolyn Sherwin Bailey. Stories Children Need. Milton Bradley Co.
 Carolyn Sherwin Bailey. Once Upon a Time Animal Stories. Milton Bradley Company.
 Alicia Aspinwall. Short Stories for Short People. E. P. Dutton & Co.
 Boston Collection of Kindergarten Stories. J. L. Hammett, Boston.
 Annie Klingensmith. Just Stories. Flanagan.
 James Baldwin. Fifty Famous Stories Retold. American Book Co.
 Hans Anderson's Fairy Tales. Any good edition.
 Aesops Fables. Any good edition.
 Grimms' Household Tales. Any good edition.

Books for the Child's Library

The child who is charmed with good stories will want to read good books. He will want books of his own. Every child should be helped to build up a good library. No child will long read "trashy" books if he can get good ones. The "trashy" book is the one that lies to the child. It misrepresents. A child dislikes a book that lies just as he dislikes a person who betrays him.

What then, are the best books for children's libraries? Such a question can not be answered off hand. Boys and girls differ, but there are some collections of books that interest all types of boys and girls. Parents should consult a librarian to find what are the best books for children's libraries. Or, they should get one or more of the following books which give selected, well graded, and classified lists of the best books for boys and girls. From such lists, the parent may select books with the assurance that he is getting the very best.

Graded 1 Lists of Selected Books for Children

Graded List of Books for Children. The American Library Association
 A Selected List of Recent Books for Children. Federation for Child Study, New York.
 Penrhyn W. Coussens. One Thousand Books for Children. A.C. McClurg and Co., Chicago.
 Clary W. Hunt. What Shall We Read to the Children. Houghton Mifflin Company.
 G. W. Arnold. Mother's List of Books for Children.
 Corrinne Bacon. Children's Catalog of 3,500 Books. American Library Association.
 Brooklyn Public Library. Books for Boys and Girls. Brooklyn, N. Y.
 Newark Free Public Library. Books for Boys and Girls. Newark, N. J.
 St. Louis Public Library. Books to Buy for Children.
 Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. Catalog of Books in the Children's Department.
 (Graded)

The children in the rural and village schools are entitled to have as good books as are the children in the cities. Every father and mother should follow up the story-telling hour with helps and suggestions by which the children can earn and save money with which to start a library of the very best books children like to read.