THE

FIRST THEFT.

BY

MRS. MARSHALL,

OF MANCHESTER.

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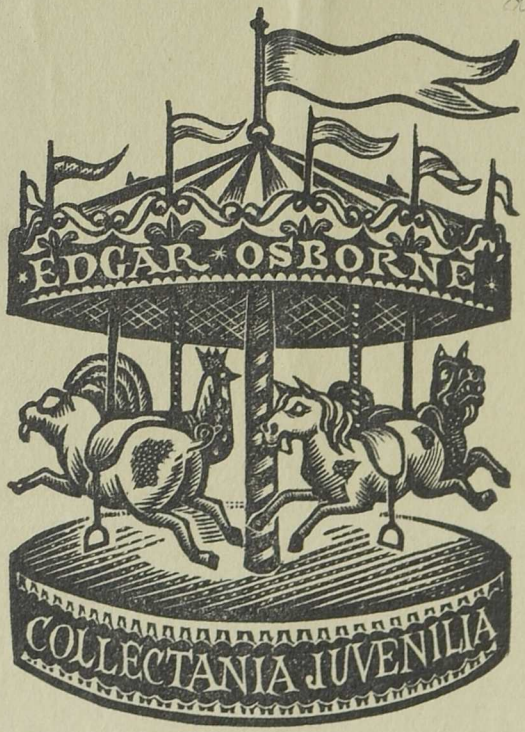

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THE FIRST THEFT;

A TALE.

BY

Mrs. MARSHALL, of Manchester.

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M.DCCC XXXIX.

THE FIRST THEFT.

In another little book which I have published, I have told my little friends a story of *The First Lie*, —that they might see how one lie leads to another, and another; and how a little child who intends to tell *only one*, is led on and on in sin and misery, unable to go back or to help itself.

But *lying* is not the only sin that, *once begun*, drags us on thus in spite of ourselves, till we either become completely wicked and depraved, or else are landed in some dreadful situation of sorrow and shame. Some of my young friends may think, on reading the title of this story, that *theft* is a strange subject to write upon for them, who from their station are placed above all temptation to steal,—who never in their lives did steal any thing. I have no doubt it is so with *some* of my dear little friends, but I know it is not so with *all*. Some will read this book, who need this story, and on them I hope it will make a deep impression for their good, and have some effect in pre-

venting their repeating a fault so mean, so degrading, so unworthy of any child who ever wishes or expects to be called a lady or a gentleman, or hopes to be happy either in this world, or the world beyond the grave.

Emily Ascott was about ten years old; her mama was in very bad health, and had for many months been wholly confined to her bed. Her family consisted of Emily and a little boy about four years old.

Emily was a very good little girl; up to the time I am going to tell you of, she had been the greatest comfort to her parents; she was very attentive to her lessons,—tried as much as possible to avoid giving trouble, and to be as useful to her mama in every way as she could. Every morning she made breakfast for her papa, sat at the head of the table, and poured out his tea for him; and when his breakfast was over, she put away the sugar, the marmalade, and all the things that had been used, locked the tea-caddy and the sideboard, and took the bunch of keys into her mama's room, before she went out to school at ten o'clock.

Emily was passionately fond of sweet things. Now it cannot be well called *a fault* for a little boy or girl to be fond of sweets; but I have often thought it

was a great misfortune, both to mind and body; for if it be not early and judiciously restrained, it leads to many disgusting and disgraceful faults, both in childhood and maturer years. A greedy, self-indulging *child* will most surely be a greedy, self-indulging man or woman. The greediness of sugar-plums and tarts no doubt goes off with childhood, but the disposition remains behind, only directed to other objects,—more important, more culpable.

For a long while after Emily was intrusted with her mama's keys she continued most strictly honest and faithful, though often sorely tempted, when she was taking out jelly or marmalade for breakfast and tea, to taste a little of it herself. One morning she was taking out sugar from the canister into the bowl, and a piece fell; Emily sought on the floor, but could not find it, but after she had taken the keys to her mama's room, she observed the bit of sugar lying under a chair; she picked it up, it was a nice large piece; she thought "I'm sure it's not worth while to go for the keys to put back this one bit of sugar,—I think I'll just eat it;" she did so, and thought it was excellent; but, even while she was munching it in her mouth, the thought rose up in her mind,—"I

wonder if it was dishonest of me to eat this?" and she endeavoured to persuade herself that, the sugar having *fallen*, it was not dishonest in her to take it. Next morning she purposely let fall another piece, and did *not* look for it, and then in the same way she picked it up afterwards and ate it; she found it very difficult to persuade herself that *this* was not dishonest, so she tried not to think of it at all.

Once or twice her little brother came toddling into the room when she was thieving, and she trembled from head to foot lest he should notice what she was about. Once it occurred to her,—"Oh, how wrong what I am doing must be, since I dread even a little infant seeing me."

Why did it never occur to Emily that God, her Creator and her Judge, was seeing her *always?* Poor foolish Emily!

Thus, my little readers, did unfortunate Emily *begin*, and I beg you will observe that the great misfortunes which she came to endure never would have happened but for this *trifle*, as some would call it; but nothing, however small, is a *trifle*, that *begins a sin*.

She very soon gave up the ceremony of letting the

bits of sugar *fall;* instead of that they were thrust into her pocket, not one at a time, but at last in whole handfuls. At length, one morning, when she was at this work, and had pushed more pieces into her pocket than she had ever done before, she felt herself suddenly caught hold of by the arm, and rudely whirled round. Emily grew blind with terror, lest it should be her papa; and it was some relief to her to find it was only Sally, the house-maid. This was a servant against whom her mama had frequently warned her, and desired her on no account to have any familiarity or communication with, because she had not a good opinion of her. "Oh, oh, Miss," cried Sally, in an impertinent tone, "so I've caught you; that's the way you go on, is it, when your mama gives *you* the keys, instead of giving them to *me*, as she ought to do! —I'm very glad I've found you out, however; I'll soon let your mama know what a fine steward she has chosen for her keys; ha, ha, ha." Emily felt her heart burn with indignation at this insulting language from a servant, but what could she do? *She was degraded by her own conduct*, and *dared* not resent it. So far from that indeed, that in the most humble and pitiful manner she besought the insolent Sally not to

inform her mama what she had seen; but Sally was too cunning to yield to her entreaties without making her pay dearly for it, so she pretended to be quite immoveable; driven to desperation, the weeping Emily threw herself on her knees before her,—"Oh, Sally, *dear* Sally, don't tell of me, and I'll give you every thing I have in the world; I'll give you my four half-crowns, Sally—I'll give you my four half-crowns."

"What do I care for your half-crowns, forsooth!" said the wicked woman; "it's not a dirty four half-crowns that'll make me let you go, I can tell you, Miss Thief."

"Oh Sally, Sally, tell me what you will have, and if I can, I will give it you," cried the miserable child.

"Well, well," said Sally with a sneer, "rise up and dry your eyes, and in the first place, let's see the half-crowns."

Away Emily ran, and brought her treasured half-crowns—her birth-day present from her father! How proudly had they been received, how proudly kept; and *now* how were they going? To buy the concealment of her guilt! Was the poor pleasure of eating bits of sugar, or spoonfuls of jelly, or eating *any thing* worth such a sacrifice?

Sally deliberately put the four half-crowns in her pocket, and then said, "Now you must give me some tea."

"Tea!" repeated the trembling Emily, "I have no tea."

"Havn't you the keys, you blockhead," said Sally, with a loud laugh; "havn't you the keys of the tea-box?"

"But, Sally, that is mama's tea; I dare not take it to give to you."

"Oh, oh," retorted Sally, "you've grown *honest* all of a sudden, have you, Miss? Very well, good bye t'ye, I'll go and tell your mama, this very moment, what I found you doing." And she walked towards the door. Emily flew after her, screaming, "Oh, don't, don't tell mama, Sally; I implore you, do not."

"Will you be a rational good girl, then, and give me some tea? What do you make such a fuss about? it's no more than your mama would do if she were up. She often gave me tea—aye as much as a pound at a time—in a present."

"Did she, Sally?" said Emily, feeling that it was a lie the woman was telling, yet eager to believe any

thing that made her own conduct appear less culpable. "Did she really?" repeated she.

"To be sure she did," said the wicked Sally, with the greatest effrontery; "Come come," she added, "just give me the key and I'll take it, and then it will not be your doing, you know."

Emily's hand shook, and her conscience bitterly condemned her when she allowed Sally to take the keys with which her good and kind mama had entrusted her, and to help herself to a quantity of tea, and sugar also. She did not dare to go to her mama's bedside to bid her good bye, as usual. She laid down the keys on her table and slunk out of the room. All day at school she was more utterly wretched than I can describe; and many, many were the repentant resolutions she formed, never, never, while she breathed, to be guilty of even the smallest theft. Her thoughts were not upon her lessons, so that all went wrong, and every one of her masters was angry with her.

She had medals both in the French and grammar classes, and had kept them for more than a week, but that day she lost them both. She came home miserable, dejected, and humiliated. At the door she was

met by Sally: she started back with horror and disgust from her—but Sally was all smiles, and whispering to her, she said, "Look in the little press in your own room, and see what I have put there for you."

When Emily went to her room, and looked into the press, she found a very nice large apple tart. Now Emily's mama had most strictly forbidden her ever to accept of sweet things, or eatables of any sort, from the servants. This order she had hitherto strictly obeyed; but, alas! when we commit one fault, who can tell where we shall end? Had she thought but for one moment, she would have seen that, to accept of presents of this sort from Sally, was to put herself more and more in that wicked woman's power, and must make it more and more impossible for her to keep the good resolutions she had formed, of never again being dishonest.

Too late did she find that this was true, for no sooner had she gone into the parlour next morning to get ready her papa's breakfast, than Sally followed her, and, shutting the door, told her that she must have some coffee, and a glass or two of brandy for a sick cousin. Emily was quite unprepared for this renewal of Sally's demands—for, like a poor inexperienced child,

she was, she had supposed that the four half-crowns and the tea and sugar of the day before, had for ever satisfied and silenced her. Poor little girl! she burst into tears and begged and implored she would not oblige her to steal any more. Sally only tossed her head, and said, "Oh, very well, Miss; since that's the way of it, I'll just go up to your mama, and tell her what you have done already; there was no word of all this mighty honesty when you were eating the tart I made with the sugar you gave me yesterday. I put every grain of it into that tart—but to be sure I doesn't need to care about it. You may just do as you please."

"Oh," thought Emily, "that I had never, never been dishonest, and then I never could have been so miserable!"

She hid her face in her hands and sobbed. Sally left the room, and Emily heard her go up the stairs that led to her mama's apartment, and, unable to endure the agonizing thought that she had gone to tell of her, she flew up the stairs, and beckoning to her, whispered she would give her what she wanted. Alas, alas! if instead of thus weakly yielding to the fear of her mama's just displeasure for what was past, she had gone at once to her room, and throwing herself into her

dear mother's arms, confessed all to her, oh, how very different would the evil have been! No doubt, a papa or mama's displeasure is very sad to bear,—the fear of losing their good opinion is a dreadful thing; but, my dear little readers, try, oh try, always to remember how much better and easier confession is, when you are at the *beginning* of your faults, than it can ever be again; and that a sincere confession will always bring half forgiveness with it. So well does every good parent know the value of a habit of sincerity in their children, that a *great* fault *confessed* will always be more readily forgiven than a *small* one *concealed.*

Thus it went on, however; for Emily had no one to advise or direct her, and from day to day Sally increased her demands—always taking care, at the same time, to pamper the poor child's appetite for sweets, and Emily always eating what was offered her, though her conscience all the while upbraided her. At length, one morning Sally told her she must leave the keys with her, instead of putting them into her mama's room before she went to school.

"Oh Sally," cried Emily, "how can I do that? You know mama would notice if I did not lay them down on the table as usual."

"Oh pho, no fear; you know your mama's curtains are always shut; so all you have to do is just to jingle the keys on the table, as if you were laying them down, and bring them away in your hand. I'm not going to do any harm with the keys, its only in case any thing is wanted when you're out; it is so strange to say I never have the keys; I always had the whole keys, I can tell you, in my last place."

"I cannot do it, Sally; indeed, indeed, I cannot," said Emily imploringly.

"Well, well, just as you please. I have a fine large pot of sweetmeats I got in a present, and I meant to give it to you, but if so be you won't do that much for me, I'll keep them to myself."

"What sort of sweetmeats, Sally?"

"Fine West India sweetmeats, to be sure."

"And how big is the pot?" said Emily, looking wistfully.

"As big as that," said Sally, holding up her two hands.

"Oh dear me, I would like to taste them! Are they very nice, Sally?"

"Nice! You never tasted any thing so nice all your life. Nice indeed! And I meant to have given

you the whole pot just to yourself; but I won't do it now, since you won't do what I am sure is no favour to me; for what's the use of the keys to me? but only for your mama's credit I wished to have them, because all other people's servants just laugh at her for her scrubbishness, when they see that I have not the keys to keep." The sound of Mr. Ascott's footsteps approaching the parlour, put an end to Miss Sally's oration, and set her off like a shot at another door.

I said at the beginning of my story, that greediness of sweets, or indeed of anything, was a great misfortune; so it proved to Emily. All day the thought of this pot of West-India sweetmeats was pictured to her imagination as so large, and so good, and so sweet, and so delightful! And must she lose it, only for not leaving the keys with Sally, who said she wanted nothing with them,—no harm would be done to mama by leaving them, surely? Conscience cried out, "Sally wants the keys, that she may steal your papa and mama's property," but Emily tried not to hear the voice of this disagreeable friend, who *always* tells us when we are wrong.

Next morning Sally renewed her entreaties, her coaxings, and her threatenings for the keys; and

Emily—how shall I tell it? Emily was so base as to consent to deceive and cheat her dear mama, who was too sick to notice anything, by jingling the keys on the table, at the side of her bed-curtain, and then taking them away to the detestable woman who was thus leading her to ruin. Her hands trembled and her knees shook. At the door, she would have turned back and laid them down again, but her enemy was there on the watch, and, seizing hold of her, prevented the unfortunate child obeying this suggestion of the good spirit.

She went away to school dejected and miserable at what she had done. Instead of thinking with any pleasure on her dearly purchased pot of sweetmeats, she loathed the very thoughts of it. Again she got into disgrace at school, and she returned home wretched and discontented. Sally was waiting for her, as she said, to give her back the keys, and she did so with an assurance, that not a place nor a press had she opened while Emily was away. This was some comfort to the miserable child, and she tried to forget, that that made no difference in her criminal deceitfulness to her mother.

"Look in your little press," said Sally, with a

significant nod, "and see who is good to you." Emily could not resist looking, and there, indeed, was a pot of the most delicious preserved citron, all floating in perfumed syrup. Who could resist this? Not Emily, who had learned the fatal lesson of preferring the momentary gratification of her palate to every noble and pleasure-giving feeling of honesty and truth. She ate and ate till the pot was almost empty, nor do I know when she would have stopped, had the dinner-bell not sounded.

Of course, she could eat no dinner. Her father observed this, and, with tender solicitude, inquired if she was unwell? Emily caught at this excuse, and answered, with a faltering voice, "A little, papa," while her cheeks flushed with shame and horror at her own falsehood. Every expression of kindness her father lavished upon her went to her heart like a dagger, as she well knew, how different his words and feelings to her would have been, had he known the truth! Long before it was time for her to go to bed, she began in reality to feel the illness she had feigned, and was most happy to get away to her own room, where her over-loaded stomach relieved itself of the much admired citron, in as great a hurry as if it had

been the vilest thing in the world. All night long she suffered extremely; her head ached and throbbed, and she was so sick that to sleep was impossible. Thus she had time to think, and her thoughts were not pleasant. She wished to pray, and she could not; she had ceased to say her daily prayers from the time she became a thief; now, when she wished to cry to God for mercy and guidance, her mind became possessed with the idea, that God would refuse to listen to so very wicked a child, and she wept in hopeless silence.

Have any of my little readers ever been so very unfortunate as to feel thus? Let them be assured there cannot be a more false idea. God never did, never will, refuse to hear even the most wicked persons, if they pray *in real sincerity of heart.* Did not our Saviour pray for forgiveness to his very murderers? Does he not say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?" and the load and labour he means are those of sin. When the good spirit in your heart would prompt you to pray, never, never turn away from it with the hopeless terror of not being heard. "God waits to be gracious," to give you strength and comfort in every need, if you

but ask it. It is impossible for us to know *how* he will answer our prayers, but we may always rest satisfied that they *will* be answered in some way.

Sally took good care her poor victim should not escape; every day she contrived new ways to decoy her further into guilt. It happened that Emily was asked to a children's ball, and she took it into her head to wish very much to have a necklace, to wear on this occasion; and no necklace would please her, but one she had seen hanging in a jeweller's window on her way to school. Her papa and mama refused to buy it for her, telling her that it was quite unfit for her age. Emily, instead of submitting at once, cried and fretted, and became more than ever anxious for the necklace. When Sally discovered her grief, and its cause, she told her to dry her eyes, and never mind, for *she* would get the necklace for her; and, to be sure, next day she produced it. "But, Sally, how can I wear it; for papa and mama will see it?" "Oh, pho," said her tempter, "can't you put it in your pocket till you are at Mrs. Arundel's house, and then put it on, and take it off when you are coming away again? You know nobody there will know anything about it." To this base conduct did Emily consent; she wore the

necklace, and trembled every time she saw anybody look at it. Next day, Sally made another demand for the keys, which she, now more than ever at her mercy, durst not refuse to comply with.

Time went on, and poor Emily became a very unhappy child. The loads of sweets with which the wicked Sally kept her supplied, and which she, poor infatuated little creature, always ate, kept her stomach constantly uneasy, and undermined her health. She lived in constant dread of detection. If any one came suddenly into the room, or she heard a hasty foot approach her, she would start and tremble, always thinking they came to say her tricks were found out.

Her papa and mama were afflicted at the change on their once healthy and happy child. Mrs. Ascott was still unable to leave her bed, and, after a consultation, they resolved to ask Mr. Ascott's sister Anne to come and take charge of the house, and of Emily. She had formerly been very fond of her aunt Anne, and her papa and mama were astonished to observe how little pleasure she seemed to feel, when told that her good kind aunt was coming to visit them; but my little readers can guess why it was anything but pleasant to Emily.

The very day after Miss Ascott came, Emily's papa asked some friends to dine with him. Mrs. Ascott told Emily to give her aunt the keys, and show her the plate-chest, that she might give out some trays, and other silver things which would be required. When Miss Ascott opened the chest, there were no silver trays there; indeed, there was little or nothing in it. "What is the reason of that? Is there any other place in which the plate is ever kept?" said she to Emily, who was standing by. "Not that I know of, aunt," said Emily, looking to John, the foot-boy, who was waiting for the things. "If you please, madam," said he, "I saw my mistress put all the silver, saving what we uses every day, in here, just two days afore she was taken ill; they were never out since, as I knows of." "Nor I either," said Emily; "I never had the chest open, and I never saw them out."

"It is very extraordinary indeed," said Miss Ascott, "but we must look elsewhere;" so saying, she opened the sideboard, and from it she went to every other place where it was possible such things could be, but in vain, not an article of the sort could be found. Miss Ascott felt much alarmed, but, unwilling to disturb

Mrs. Ascott, she sent for her brother. While they waited his coming, she said to Emily, "My dear child, are you sure that you were always careful of your mama's keys, when you had them? You never left them hanging in the locks when you went out?"

"Oh, no, never, I assure you, never," said Emily, reddening excessively.

"Or entrusted them to any other person?" said Miss Ascott, looking very hard at her. Emily grew as pale as death, and seemed as if she would have fainted, for, at this question of her aunt's, the whole truth flashed upon her mind, that Sally had stolen the plate, the day she was so base as to leave her mother's keys in her possession! She hesitated and faltered,—what should she do? Tell the truth? At the thought of all the disgrace to which that would expose her, the blood rushed back to her face and neck, and her knees knocked together. A few months before, how impossible it would have been for her, to utter the enormous falsehood which she now told, in the vain hope that it would hide her other sins! "No, no, I never gave them to anybody."

As she uttered this lie her father entered the room, and she took advantage of the earnest conversation

that followed, between her aunt and him, to slip out of the room unperceived.

She ran, like a poor guilty thing as she was, up to her own room, and, throwing herself upon her bed, she gave way to the most violent bursts of sobbing. It is impossible for any innocent child to conceive how very, very dreadful were her feelings. She now, for the first time, saw her guilt in its true colours,—she was a thief and a liar,—many, many persons have been hanged for conduct less base than hers. Her father had been robbed, she heard him say, as she left the dining-room, to the amount of 200*l.*; and all this had arisen from her detestable greediness for sweetmeats! Oh, if she had at that moment had all the sweetmeats in the world in her power, how willingly, how gladly would she have exchanged them, for the peace of mind and innocence she had thrown away to procure a few mouthfuls! What a pity! that nothing but the iron hand of experience will teach us, how short, how deceitful are the joys, and how bitter the consequences, of any departure from the straight road of truth and honesty.

As she lay upon her bed, agonized with bitter repentance, it all at once occurred to her mind, that

perhaps Sally had only taken the plate away for fun to frighten her, and intended to put it back again, not expecting it would be missed in the mean time. Delighted with this idea, Emily started up, and, drying her eyes, she went in search of Sally; she found her in one of the garrets, where she slept; shutting the door carefully, she went up to her, "Oh, Sally, did you take the silver plate? Why did you take it?"

The wretch, who was standing a little distance from her, at these words wheeled round, her eyes glaring like those of a wild cat, and her whole face distorted with fury,—"*I* took the silver plate! you little impertinent good-for-nothing wretch; I'll teach you to say, *I* took your silver plate,—take that, and that, and that, for your impertinence;" and, as she uttered the words, she seized on the trembling Emily, and struck her such unmerciful blows with her great fist, that the unfortunate child was stunned with their violence. Sally shook her by the shoulders, and, dragging her forward to the door, thrust her out into the passage, vociferating, as she did so, "If you ever dare, for the life of you, to utter such words again, I'll not only tell your father and mother of all your tricks, but I'll kill you dead—so I will."

She slammed to the door upon Emily, who, stupefied with blows and consternation, sunk down upon the floor in the lobby, unable to utter even one cry expressive of the agony she felt. Beaten, abused, and insulted thus by a servant, in vain was her indignation, for to whom could she complain? or to whom apply for redress? As she lay silently weeping, she was much surprised to see her papa, accompanied by a strange coarse-looking man, coming up the garret-stairs. Frightened to meet her papa in such a state as she was, she crept behind a large wardrobe, out of sight.

Her papa and the man went straight to the door of the room where Sally was, and finding it was bolted inside, they knocked.

"Who is there?" said Sally, in a sharp voice.

"Open this door instantly," said Mr. Ascott.

"Oh, dear me, Sir, is it you—I'm sure I'm very sorry, but I cannot open the door just yet—for—I'm dressing, I'm dressing, Sir."

"Open the door instantly—or I'll order it to be broke up," said Mr. Ascott.

After a considerable bustle within, the door was opened.—Emily peeped from her hiding-place, and she saw that there was no change whatever on Sally's

dress—and that her face still looked red and furious. She heard her papa say, as he entered the room—"You are, no doubt, aware that a great quantity of silver-plate has disappeared. I have got a warrant, and a king's officer to search every part of the house—the trunks of your fellow-servants have already been searched—you have, I suppose, no objection that yours should be the same?"

"I don't care a snuff where you search," said Sally, in an insolent tone.

"I'll thank you for your keys, mistress," said the officer.

"I have no keys to give you," answered Sally. "I'm none of your thieves that has any thing to hide under locks and keys—no, no, my places is all open, search where you please."

The officer sought all her boxes, and a chest of drawers that was in the room, but not a thing did he find. Sally, notwithstanding Mr. Ascott's presence, could not restrain her insolent triumph at this;—but when the officer next approached her bed, to search it, she became quite outrageous,—saying, "It was a shame to be heard of, any man being so impertinent as meddle with *her* bed."

The officer, was, I suppose, accustomed to be talked to in this manner, for he paid not the least attention, but coolly lifted up the bed-clothes, and then rolled up the mattrass, shook it, and felt it in every direction. Under this there was another mattrass, but when he attempted to raise it, he found it was firmly nailed to the bedstead round and round.

"That mattrass," said Sally, "never was up since *I* came to the house. I found it as you see it—so it's no use searching there, I can tell you."

"We'll see what it's made of, any how," said the man drily,—and he pulled out of the lappel of his coat a long steel needle, like what upholsterers use; and pushing it forcibly into the mattrass, it instantly struck against something that sounded like metal. He immediately began with his pen-knife to rip open the mattrass. Mr. Ascott turned round at this moment to take a look of Sally, and saw her just whisking out at the door—he darted after her, and dragging her back again, locked the door, and put the key in his pocket.

"You had better have let me go—you had better, for your own sake, Mr. Ascott,"—cried she, almost

choked with rage and agitation; "I'll make you repent bringing me back—that I will."

Mr. Ascott paid little attention to her threats—for now the officer had got the whole cover off the mattrass, and there, nicely packed, they discovered—not only the silver trays, and other things, but a number of Mr. Ascott's finest damask tablecloths and napkins.

"How came these things here, can you tell me?" said Mr. Ascott to Sally.

"Oh, yes," replied she, with a grin of the most malignant defiance, "Since you are determined to know, I'll soon tell you;—it was your own daughter, Miss Emily, that stole them, and gave them to me to keep for her, that she might dispose of them by degrees, as she needed the money."

"Hold your peace, detestable, lying wretch," said Mr. Ascott, stamping his foot,—"nor dare to utter such nefarious falsehoods of my child."

"Oh, you need not go into such a rage about it, and abuse me for a liar,"—said she, with the greatest audacity,—"go to her room, and you'll find a dozen of empty pots of Indian sweetmeats she stole, as well as

these things; and what's more, you'll find the pawnbroker's receipts for the silver things that are not here, and the necklaces and trash she bought with the money."

Alas! my little readers, you already know that Emily was a guilty child, though far from so wicked as Sally made her appear; but the sweetmeat pots *were* found in her room, her father recognised them as part of a large box of preserves sent to him from the West Indies some time before, and the convicted Emily could not deny she had secretly eaten the contents of them; the necklace, too, and the pawnbroker's receipts, were found in her drawers.

You will easily guess that it was Sally who had put the receipts into her drawers, to make her appear more guilty than she really was. But it is the peculiar misfortune of liars not to be believed, even when they speak the truth. It was in vain that Emily wept and screamed at the very mention of such a thing as her stealing the plate and the table-linen; it was evident that she *had* been a thief, she could no longer deny it; she had also been a liar—she had betrayed her mother's trust, and no one, no, not even her fond father, the father that had almost idolized her, would

believe her, or could look at her but with disgust and abhorrence.

At length she made a full and complete confession to her father of all that had taken place; told how she was first tempted to become dishonest, and how she fell under the power of the detestable Sally; and from the cowardly fear of confessing a little fault to her mother, was led step by step into such great wickedness, and such great misery. As I have already told my young friends, in the story of *The First Lie*, it is quite impossible for a little child to conceive the dreadfully wretched feelings of parents, when forced to see that the darling child, whose peace and welfare is the dearest object they have on earth, has, in spite of all their cares, become wicked, and miserable, and disgraced.

Emily was not a hardened child, and she felt as if every tear her father shed over her disgrace was a drop of scalding lead upon her own heart.

Sally was taken to prison, and soon after was tried for her life. In the open court she had the audacity to persist in saying that Emily assisted her to steal the silver plate, and that the neeklace and other toys were what she received as her share. It was not easy,

however, for such a person to persist in a falsehood in a court of law, amongst people accustomed to examine criminals, without contradicting herself so much, as to show that it was a falsehood. And this, added to the evidence of the other servants of the house, who had been observing more than Sally was aware of, made it evident that poor Emily was innocent of all knowledge of the use the wicked woman made of the keys. But only fancy to yourselves what you would feel to be exposed in a court of law, amongst such a crowd of strangers as Emily was! and obliged to hear it told, over and over again, how she had thieved, told lies, and deceived her parents. If you can form any idea of her agony, let it be a warning to you—never forget it; and try to remember, when you are tempted to commit your "First Theft," oh try to remember, that when you have once entered on the crooked path of dishonesty, though ever so little, it is utterly impossible to tell how far it may lead you, or in what endless miseries it may involve you.

When Emily lay down that night on her sleepless bed, she thought her punishment was full—she little knew what was yet in store for her!—Mr. Ascott had tried to keep all that had happened a secret from Mrs.

Ascott, dreading the bad effect the agitation might have upon her health.

At last, however, it became impossible to conceal it; for she saw something was wrong, and insisted on being told what it was. Mr. Ascott tried to make Emily's conduct appear as little disgraceful as possible; but when she learned even his account of it, and that Emily had been in a court of law, she could not bear it, but fainted again and again. A new attack of her disorder came on, and in a week after, Emily saw a band of sad mourners, with her almost distracted father at their head, move away from the door, bearing to the grave the blessed and lovely mother she so fondly loved, whom she could have died to save, and yet whom her conscience told her *she had murdered.*

Years have passed since that sad day, and Emily still lives to mourn over it. It is by her own request I have written this her sad story for you, my little friends; and she bids me tell you, that there was one mistaken idea she had, which was in a great degree the cause of all her sins and sorrows. She thought that if it was only a thing of no great value she stole, it was but a *little sin*, and God would not punish it much. This is indeed a very mistaken idea. God

created the world, and every thing in it, and could by a word of his power create millions of such worlds whenever he chose; therefore nothing on earth, however *valuable in our eyes*, can be so in his; he does not say, "Thou shalt not steal any thing *valuable*," but simply, "Thou shalt not steal;"—and the *smallest* theft we can commit is as much a breaking of this his law as could be the very *greatest*, particularly in children of your rank, who have not the excuse too many poor little criminals have, that they are driven to it by starvation, bad advice, and bad example.

Our Creator ordained that the test of our first parents' obedience in paradise, should be a thing *in itself* of so little consequence as the eating or not eating the fruit of a particular tree; thus giving us an all-important and everlasting assurance, that it is the act of breaking his moral law for which he punishes us; and not because of the value of any unjust advantage we gain—or rather, I should say, *fancy* we gain, by doing so.

It is said in the Bible, that he who sinneth in one point, is *guilty of the whole law;* and the meaning of this is exactly what I wish to impress upon your minds; namely, that the person who deliberately and

knowingly breaks God's law, in what seems a small matter, only requires a *great temptation* to commit a *great crime.* And for your own sakes I wish, my little friends, you could bear this for ever on your minds.

May God bless you all, and give you that noble and exalted spirit of truth and wisdom, "whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace."

THE END.

Jo W. Parker, St. Martin's Lane.

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BOOKS BY Mrs. MARSHALL.

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