EDGEWORTH MARIA

THE LITTLE DOG TRUSTY; THE ORANGE MAN; AND THE CHERRY ORCHARD; BEING THE TENTH PART OF EARLY LESSONS (1801)

Maria Edgeworth

The Little Dog Trusty; The Orange Man; and the Cherry Orchard; Being the Tenth Part of Early Lessons (1801)

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THE LITTLE DOG TRUSTY; OR, THE LIAR AND THE BOY OF TRUTH

Very, very little children must not read this story; for they cannot understand it: they will not know what is meant by a liar and a boy of truth.

Very little children, when they are asked a question, say "yes," and "no," without knowing the meaning of the words; but you, children, who can speak quite plain, and who can tell, by words, what you wish for, and what you want, and what you have seen, and what you have done; you who understand what is meant by the words "I have done it," or "I have not," you may read this story; for – you can understand it.

Frank and Robert were two little boys, about eight years old.

Whenever Frank did any thing wrong, he always told his father and mother of it; and when any body asked him about any thing which he had done or said, he always told the truth; so that every body who knew him, believed him: but nobody who knew his brother Robert, believed a word which he said, because he used to tell lies.

Whenever he did any thing wrong, he never ran to his father and mother to tell them of it; but when they asked him about it, he denied it, and said he had not done the things which he had done.

The reason that Robert told lies was, because he was afraid of being punished for his faults, if he confessed them. He was a coward, and could not bear the least pain; but Frank was a brave boy, and could bear to be punished for little faults: his mother never punished him so much for such little faults, as she did Robert for the lies which he told, and which she found out afterward.

One evening, these two little boys were playing together, in a room by themselves; their mother was ironing in a room next to them, and their father was out at work in the fields, so there was nobody in the room with Robert and Frank; but there was a little dog, Trusty, lying by the fire-side.

Trusty was a pretty playful little dog, and the children were very fond of him.

"Come," said Robert to Frank, "there is Trusty lying beside the fire asleep; let us go and waken him, and he will play with us."

"O yes, do, let us," said Frank. So they both ran together, towards the hearth, to waken the dog.

Now there was a basin of milk standing upon the hearth; and the little boys did not see whereabouts it stood; for it was behind them: as they were both playing with the dog, they kicked it with their feet, and threw it down; and the basin broke, and all the milk ran out of it over the hearth, and about the floor; and when the little boys saw what they had done, they were very sorry, and frightened; but they did not know what to do: they stood for some time, looking at the broken basin and the milk, without speaking.

Robert spoke first.

"So, we shall have no milk for supper to-night," said he; and he sighed —

"No milk for supper! – why not?" said Frank; "is there no more milk in the house?"

"Yes, but we shall have none of it; for, do not you remember, last Monday, when we threw down the milk, my mother said we were very careless, and that the next time we did so, we should have no more; and this is the next time; so we shall have no milk for supper to-night."

"Well, then," said Frank, "we must do without it, that's all: we will take more care another time; there's no great harm done; come, let us run and tell my mother. You know she bid us always tell her directly when we broke any thing; so come," said he, taking hold of his brother's hand.

"I will come, just now," said Robert; "don't be in such a hurry, Frank – Can't you stay a minute?" So Frank staid; and then he said, "Come now, Robert." But Robert answered, "Stay a little longer; for I dare not go yet – I am afraid."

Little boys, I advise you, never be afraid to tell the truth; never say, "*Stay a minute*," and, "*Stay a little longer*," but run directly, and tell of what you have done that is wrong. The longer you stay, the more afraid you will grow, till at last, perhaps, you will not dare to tell the truth at all. – Hear what happened to Robert.

The longer he staid, the more unwilling he was to go to tell his mother that he had thrown the milk down; and at last he pulled his hand away from his brother, and cried, "I won't go at all; Frank, can't you go by yourself?"

"Yes," said Frank, "so I will; I am not afraid to go by myself: I only waited for you out of good-nature, because I thought you would like to tell the truth too."

"Yes, so I will; I mean to tell the truth when I am asked; but I need not go now, when I do not choose it: – and why need you go either? – Can't you wait here? – Surely my mother can see the milk when she comes in."

Frank said no more; but, as his brother would not come, he went without him. He opened the door of the next room, where he thought his mother was ironing; but when he went in, he saw that she was gone; and he thought she was gone to fetch some more clothes to iron. The clothes, he knew, were hanging on the bushes in the garden; so he thought his mother was gone there; and he ran after her, to tell what had happened.

Now whilst Frank was gone, Robert was left in the room by himself; and all the while he was alone, he was thinking of some excuses to make to his mother; and he was sorry that Frank was gone to tell her the truth. He said to himself, "If Frank and I both were to say, that we did not throw down the basin, she would believe us, and we should have milk for supper. I am very sorry Frank would go to tell her about it."

Just as he said this to himself, he heard his mother coming down stairs – "Oh ho!" said he to himself, "then my mother has not been out in the garden, and so Frank has not met her, and cannot have told her; so now I may say what I please."

Then this naughty, cowardly boy, determined to tell his mother a lie.

She came into the room; but when she saw the broken basin, and the milk spilled, she stopped short, and cried; "So, so! – What a piece of work is here! – Who did this, Robert?"

"I don't know, ma'am," said Robert, in a very low voice.

"You don't know, Robert! – tell me the truth – I shall not be angry with you, child – You will only lose the milk at supper; and as for the basin, I would rather have you break all the basins I have, than tell me one lie. – So don't tell me a lie. – I ask you, Robert, did you break the basin?"

"*No, ma'am*, I did not," said Robert; and he coloured as red as fire.

"Then, where's Frank? – did he do it?"

"No mother, he did not," said Robert; for he was in hopes, that when Frank came in, he should persuade him to say that he did not do it.

"How do you know," said his mother, "that Frank did not do it?"

"Because – because – because, ma'am," said Robert, hesitating, as liars do for an excuse – "because I was in the room all the time, and I did not see him do it."

"Then how was the basin thrown down? If you have been in the room all the time, you can tell."

Then Robert, going on from one lie to another, answered,

"I suppose the dog must have done it." —

"Did you see him do it?" says his mother.

"Yes," said this wicked boy.

"Trusty, Trusty," said his mother, turning round; and Trusty, who was lying before the fire, drying his legs, which were wet with the milk, jumped up, and came to her. Then she said, "Fie! fie! Trusty!" and she pointed to the milk. – "Get me a switch out of the garden, Robert; Trusty must be beat for this."

Robert ran for the switch, and in the garden he met his brother: he stopped him, and told him, in a great hurry, all that he had said to his mother; and he begged of him not to tell the truth, but to say the same as he had done.

"No, I will not tell a lie," said Frank. – "What! and is Trusty to be beat! – He did not throw down the milk, and he shan't be beat for it – Let me go to my mother."

They both ran toward the house – Robert got first home, and he locked the house-door, that Frank might not come in. He gave the switch to his mother.

Poor Trusty! he looked up as the switch was lifted over his head; but *he* could not speak, to tell the truth. Just as the blow was falling upon him, Frank's voice was heard at the window.

"Stop, stop! dear mother, stop!" cried he, as loud as ever he could call; "Trusty did not do it – let me in – I and Robert did it – but do not beat Robert."

"Let us in, let us in," cried another voice, which Robert knew to be his father's; "I am just come from work, and here's the door locked."

Robert turned as pale as ashes when he heard his father's voice; for his father always whipped him when he told a lie.

His mother went to the door, and unlocked it.

"What's all this?" cried his father, as he came in; so his mother told him all that had happened; – how the milk had been thrown down; how she had asked Robert whether he had done it; and he said that he had not, nor that Frank had not done it, but that Trusty, the dog, had done it; how she was just going to beat Trusty, when Frank came to the window and told the truth.

"Where is the switch with which you were going to beat Trusty?" said the father.

Then Robert, who saw, by his father's look, that he was going to beat him, fell upon his knees, and cried for mercy, saying, "Forgive me this time, and I will never tell a lie again."

But his father caught hold of him by the arm – "I will whip you now," said he, "and then, I hope, you will not." So Robert was whipped, till he cried so loud with the pain, that the whole neighbourhood could hear him.

"There," said his father, when he had done, "now go to supper; you are to have no milk to-night, and you have been whipped. See how liars are served!" Then, turning to Frank, "Come here, and shake hands with me, Frank; you will have no milk for supper; but that does not signify; you have told the truth, and have not been whipped, and every body is pleased with you. And now I'll tell you what I will do for you – I will give you the little dog Trusty, to be your own dog. You shall feed him, and take care of him, and he shall be your dog; you have saved him a beating; and, I'll answer for it, you'll be a good master to him. Trusty, Trusty, come here."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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