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SELECT STORY. MY FIRST TRANSGRESSION.

BY FERCY B. ST. JOHN. CHAPTER I.

"I do so hate ugly people," I say to myself with passionate emphasis, as I sit on the lawn tearing up the grass with my small, nervous hands.

Only for a moment he holds me thus, but in that moment I take note of his handsome face, so unlike Freddy's, with its look of almost sorrowful gravity.

"And I was very sure of it," I answer, "but for you I might have been a disagreeable one, indeed. Thank you very much for coming to my assistance."

"I flatter myself that the speech is all that can be desired, and having made it, naturally expect that the stranger will pass on, but he does nothing of the kind."

"This is rather awkward for me, and I look up at him helplessly, not knowing what to say. He has quietly ignored my thanks."

"What a pretty place this is," I presently remark, "the very prettiest spot I have ever seen, or so I shall think from to-day."

"Why from to-day? I ask innocently, wishing he would leave me, and yet unable to suppress a thrill of pleasure as we stand alone in the grassy meadow."

"Because of the lucky accident that made us acquainted," he answers. "The words, the glance that accompanied them, bring the warm blood to my cheeks."

"What is the matter?" he asks, frowning himself on the grass and nursing his knees at the distance of a few feet.

"Don't be rude," I cry, angrily. "If you don't talk like a gentleman you can go away. I won't have you make fun of my sisters."

"I abuse them myself, but I won't have them abused by other people. His words have aroused a little feeling of compunction in my breast."

"You will regret it, I feel, for he is putting out a strong right hand to touch my cheek, a liberty which I instantly resent."

"I leave me alone," I return with flashing eyes. "I return with flashing eyes. I return with flashing eyes."

"How cross you are!" he cries, putting out a strong right hand to touch my cheek, a liberty which I instantly resent.

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does—into a pleasant shady lane. On reaching it, I walk more slowly, gazing up at the sky through the inter-leaving branches.

"Oh!" I cry in surprise and consternation as I fall into the outstretched arms of a gentleman who has approached me unobserved, his feet not making a noise on the soft sward.

Only for a moment he holds me thus, but in that moment I take note of his handsome face, so unlike Freddy's, with its look of almost sorrowful gravity.

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"Where have you been, Nell?" asks papa, with a smile, as I enter.

"For a walk," I answer briefly, as I throw down my hat, feeling as if they must read what is passing in my mind.

"You might have left me come," says poor Fred! I think he is fond of his old playfellow.

Presently it is time to say good-bye, and we all disperse, for Freddy has stopped until the last moment.

"I cannot sleep, for it is the last time I shall occupy my little white bed—the very last. Conscience is not utterly stifled by love. It will tell me that I am doing wrong. My sisters are cold and hard, but it is their nature; my father is all that a daughter could wish."

"But still, when evening comes again, I go to meet my lover, turning my head once or twice to look at the lighted windows of the dear old rectory. How long will it be before I see it again?"

"I make no answer, but, clinging to Vincent's arm, wait for him to speak. "Out of the way!" he cries angrily.

"But Freddy stands firm, meeting his gaze unflinchingly. He looks brave, and true, and good, but my sympathies are all with Vincent."

"I will let you pass if you release this lady, Captain Adderly," is Freddy's calm reply.

"What does he mean? I do not give him time to say more. My heart gives a great leap, and then seems as if it stood still."

"Captain Adderly! I repeat. "Freddy, do you know that you are saying? This is Vincent Powerscroft, my future husband. Vincent, say something to convince him of the mistake he has made."

"Nell, will you listen to this man who is trying to poison your mind against me?" cries my lover.

"Yes, I will listen to me," says Freddy, calmly. "Nell, little playmate, do not go with this man who so cruelly ill-treated and neglected his own wife that she has been driven into a lunatic asylum by his unkindness. Let him deny it if he dare!"

"Hold your meddling tongue, fool!" cries Vincent, fiercely, and taking a pistol from his pocket, he deliberately fires it at Fred, who puts up his hands and falls back with a gasping cry.

"Come!" cries my lover, and would urge me forward, but I draw back with a loud scream, and rush away like one bereft of reason.

"Nell! Nell!" shouts my lover, but I heed not the voice that had been so dear. All I think of in Freddy, dead or dying, is the kind old playmate who has never given me an angry word.

"Of course my father and sisters have to be told everything, but no one else knows a word of what happened. Freddy is brought to the rectory, where he lies in peril of his life for several weary days. Captain Adderly has gone abroad. I hope he'll stay there."

"They tell me Freddy will live. How glad I am!—although he must hate the sight of me when he remembers all the trouble I have caused him. They say he wants to see me, but I cannot go just now. I sleep when I remember the day when I wished him dead. How nearly that wish has been realized!"

"At last I go, and the last shadow of my romance fades as I kneel beside his couch."

"Nell," he says, "poor little Nell, forgive me for all the trouble I have caused you."

"It is you who must forgive me," I cry, and then I take his hands in mine and kiss them.

"Don't! don't!" he says, and turns a shade or two paler, and "shrinks back as if my lips had blistered him. "I thought you must hate me," I answer meekly.

"Hate you?" he cries. "Nell! don't you know that I have loved you all my life?"

"He turns away his head, but my arm steals round his neck, and, as he looks up at me, I whisper in his ear that I love him, and that my first transgression shall be my last."

"Nell," he says, after a little foolish lovers' talk—foolish, perhaps, in the ears of others if they could hear it, but so sweet to me—"who is that lumbering fellow I saw smoking a cigar in your garden the other night?"

"Oh, you mean Freddy," I answer with a light laugh. "Surely you are not jealous of poor old Freddy?"

"I am jealous of any one who seems fond of you, but only because I know, he says, that my father would never consent, and I feel that what he says is only too true."

"My father would yield to the strong will of my sisters. "Dadling," he utters, "you will not refuse my request?"

"No, it is true—I cannot. I love him so dearly that I am wretched just how to talk to a woman; understands the way to lead her to my will."

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