

(ORIGINAL.)

ANNE AND CLARA.

A TALE.

BY M. W. B.

"WELL, my dear mamma," cried the lovely Anne Courtland, as her mother entered the parlour, where herself and cousin were sitting at their needle, "where have you been passing the evening, for I perceive, by your dress, that you have been out?"

"I have been where the presence of my darling daughter would have added much to my happiness, could I have hoped the society she would have met there, would have given her pleasure."

"Thank you, dear mother; but that is not telling us where you have been."

"Indeed!" replied Mrs. Courtland, smiling rather archly, "I think you may form a tolerable idea of the sort of persons with whom I have been, although you may not perhaps so well understand *who they were*."

"Ah! I can guess;" and an expression of contempt slightly curled her rosy lip as she continued, "you have been visiting Mrs. Thompson; were any other *praying* people there?"

"There were several pious people there, my child, and no one can be pious without prayer—and now tell me what you have both been doing since I deserted you? Clara, you seem dull—I hope Anne has not omitted any of the duties of a hospitable hostess?"

"She has not, indeed, dear aunt. We have been reading, and had laid aside our book but a short time before you came in. I would like to hear more of the visit you have been making—may I ask if it was of a religious nature?"

"It was a prayer-meeting, my dear, and was particularly interesting to me. But I see Anne dislikes the subject, therefore we will drop it, and I will lay aside my hat and shawl."

"Pray, mamma," said the now pouting daughter, "do not withhold any such delightful conversation from cousin Clara, on my account—I can withdraw."

Clara Allen saw the displeasure of her cousin, and requested her aunt to defer her communication until another time; and her aunt, pressing her lips to Clara's forehead, told her she was a dear, considerate, charming girl; then, advancing to Anne, she kissed her also, with much tenderness, as she said, "Come, now my love, smooth your brow; all unpleasant subjects are prohibited, and we will be very happy in your own way. What shall we talk about?"

"It is quite immaterial to me," replied Anne, haughtily; "pray, tell Clara what sanctified people you have been with—she is a stranger, you know,

and will like to be made acquainted with your friends."

"If you find pleasure in ridiculing the friends of your mother, Anne," said Mrs. Courtland, gravely, "you must introduce them yourself."

"Well, then, I believe I shall do it best; at any rate, with less partiality than yourself, mother," said the now brightening girl, "and I will begin, Clara, by making you acquainted with Mrs. Thompson, the lady at whose house the prayer-meeting has been held. She was a tall, square-shouldered, large old-maid, when the little Mr. Thompson made her his bride and the mistress of his fine house and finer fortune. Since her elevation, she has made wonderful professions of religion, goes to church three times on Sunday—looks devout when there—makes a great fuss about doing good and being charitable—and, to cap the climax, has evening meetings—and sister's meetings, and all sorts of meetings at her house; and when her friends are gone home, amuses herself, I dare say, with pulling them in pieces, and scattering their characters to the four winds of heaven."

"And how have you been employed all this time, my dear Anne?" asked the mother: "Where, if we are to credit all you say, is the character of poor Mrs. Thompson? You have done wrong; but let us leave my friends in peace, and talk of your own. Have you had no company this evening?"

Anne blushed as she replied, "Only Edward for a few moments; I think he has become Clara's admirer, for he seemed devoted to her."

"Jealous!" cried Clara, laughing. "I thought cousin Anne knew herself too well, to experience that uncomfortable emotion; but, banish it immediately; for it will be exceedingly foolish to indulge it on my account, as I assure you I have no wish to attract Mr. Richmond."

"He is not sufficiently pious, I suppose," and the curl returned to the beautiful lip.

"That would be an objection, even were there no other; but although very agreeable, I should really prefer calling him cousin, to husband."

"What are your other objections to Mr. Richmond, Clara?" enquired Mrs. Courtland; "may we not know them?"

"Excuse me, dear aunt; I confess myself very presumptuous in expressing my opinion so freely, of one with whom I am so little acquainted; and I am aware, dear Anne, that I ought to like him for your sake, as my cousin elect."