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Anna, the Tale Bearer

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ANNA,

THE

TALE BEARER.

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nbellished with a Magic Lantern Exhibition.

'ublished and Sold by David Hogan, No. 249,
Market-street, Philadelphia.

ANNA,

THE TALE BEARER.

MR. AND MRS. MANLY, CAROLINE, SOPHY, FREDERIC, AND EDWARD.

MR. MANLY.

AS I have, in the Story of Peevish William, exhibited Miss Allen in boy's clothes, I will now show you Charles Maitland in petticoats: for though Anna differed from him in some respects, their dispositions were very much alike in many others, and the impertinent curiosity and meddling of both were extremely disagreeable.

SOPHY.

And here she comes!—oh! no.—I see a soldier, a woman, and a child, but no Anna. I do not understand your story from this. What can a soldier have to do in it?—I have no idea of what can be coming.

I hope you will understand it when you hear it; but you have no patience, Sophy.—I am now going to begin.

A party of young ladies, attended by a maid servant, arose with the lark, on a fine spring morning, to go and breakfast at a farm-house, at the distance of two miles from the town in which they lived. They had crossed the road, and reached the end of the first field, when one of them insisted on returning, and told the servant she would not on any account proceed a step farther, her cousin Anna having informed her that her papa and mamma had designedly sent her out of the way, because they were that morning to set out for London, and wished to avoid the disagreeable ceremony of taking leave.

The servant assured her it was a mistake, and endeavoured to persuade her to proceed; said that it was a pity to make her friends lose so charming a walk; that Miss Anna was always making mischief and giving trouble, by prying and listening, and picking up a bit of one conversation, and a bit of another, and repeating things in that manner which had nothing to do together.

The young lady was not, however, to be pacified; she would not, for the whole world, that her papa and mamma should go to London without taking leave of her; said she was certain she should never see them again, and insisted so

much on returning immediately, that it was impossible to oppose it; and, to the great regret and disappointment of the little party, in less than a quarter of an hour, instead of finding themselves in a pleasant wood, where they had hoped to collect a basket full of strawberries to eat with their breakfast, they found themselves again at the entrance of the town from which they had departed with so much gaiety and pleasure.

Arrived at the house, the young lady was surprised at finding her mamma, in her usual morning dress, just come down stairs, and her papa with her in the breakfast room, reading the newspaper, without any appearance of hurry or preparation for travelling. On acquainting them with the cause of her sudden return, Anna was desired to explain the reasons she had for alarming her cousin by such a piece of intelligence; but it was not easy for her to give a clear account of the matter, for she had made it up, according to her usual custom, out of bits and scraps which had no relationship, and so strangely put together, that it was hardly possible to suppose she herself believed what she was saying.

In justice, however to Anna's heart, it must be acknowledged that she never had any intention of making mischief, or giving pain to any one; but her passion for prying into other people's affairs, and her extreme love of tattling, and of appearing to know every body and every thing which concerned them, where they came from, where they were going, what business they were going upon,

and what they had said to such a one, what to another, and repeating every thing she could pick up, without recollecting how she had mixed and confused it in her head, had gained her the name of a mischief maker, and one who paid but little regard to truth.

Hearing a lady one day tell her mamma that Mr. Banks had sold his house and furniture, and was gone to Jamaica; and, in the course of conversation, happening to mention that her cousin Lambert had taken his two little boys from school, which she thought a great pity, she told every body she met during her evening's walk, that Mr. Lambert's sons were gone to Jamaica, and that their papa had sold his house and furniture to Mr. Banks, which had displeased Mrs. Howard extremely; and she knew it to be true, having heard that lady tell her mamma of it.

Another time perceiving her papa and mamma engaged in conversation, and feeling a strong inclination to know what subject could engage them so much, that they did not appear to remark her going in and out of the room, she walked gently up to the window, where they stood together, pretending to look for something in her work-basket, and had the pleasure of hearing her papa say, "she is the most amiable of all the children, and I am strongly of opinion that she had better be educated at home, than be sent to any public school."

Anna, concluding she certainly must be the amiable child he was speaking of, was going to thank her papa for the favourable opinion he had

of her, and for his intention of keeping her at home; when her mamma, perceiving her, desired she would go and look for the newspaper, and bring it to her immediately. She went, in obedience to her orders: but, vexed at being obliged to leave the room without hearing a little more of a conversation in which she imagined herself so much concerned, she ran from one part of the house to another like a wild thing, and in her eagerness to return overlooked the object of her search half a dozen times before she found it.

Anna was extremely deceived when she supposed herself to be the child to whom her father alluded: it was his deceased brother's children, to whom he was appointed guardian, of whom he was speaking, and debating on their future destiny; and, at the instant Anna re-entered the room, observed that John was a sad boy, and that his domineering spirit must, by some means or other, be subdued; that he had an idea of sending him out to India, as by quitting his home for some time, where he found too many who, rather than dispute a point with him, gave up their own opinions to his: and, by living among strangers, he would learn to know that nothing is to be got by obstinacy, and that those who take upon them to dictate continually to others are the very persons who meet with the most contradiction.

Anna did not lose a syllable of this speech, and throwing down the newspaper upon the table flew directly into the garden, from thence to the shrubbbery, and never stopped till she had found

her brother John: for she no more imagined the John in question was her cousin, than she did that the most amiable child in the family could be any other than herself; and having communicated the news with as much eagerness as if it gave her pleasure, though at the same time her heart was grieved at the thought of parting with her brother, in whom she had never perceived any of the disagreeable qualities ascribed to him, she sent poor little John weeping to his papa, of whom he begged to know what he had done to offend him, that he should determine to banish him from his home to so distant a country as India; and assuring him, that if he was angry with him there was nothing that he would not do to regain his pardon, and be permitted to stay with him.

The mistake was soon cleared up to the great delight of John; and Anna, being severely reprimanded, appeared extremely penitent—but she soon forgot her sorrow: and the pleasure she felt in being the first to carry a piece of news, or to repeat the conversations she often listened to without perfectly understanding, preventing her forseeing the disagreeable consequences which often followed her imprudence, she soon after gave a strong proof of the little attention she paid to the remonstrances of her friends, by giving so severe a shock to a lady, at whose house she was on a visit with her mamma, as occasioned her a long and dangerous illness; which, had she not fortunately been blessed with an excellent constitution, might have been attended with fatal consequences.

She made so many promises, before her mamma would consent to let her accompany her on her intended visit to her friend, of being cautious of her behaviour, of never listening to conversations, or showing any desire to know what did not concern her, and, above all, of never repeating any thing she heard by accident, that she really hoped she would give her no cause to repent indulging her; and for some time after their arrival in the country, she conducted herself so well, that though she at first watched her very narrowly, and checked her by a sign of disapprobation whenever she perceived her likely to forget herself, she at length left her to herself, and attended more to her friends; and Anna, who was heartily tired of the restraint she had suffered by having been so watched, soon returned to her old occupation, whenever she was out of her mamma's sight, asking all sorts of impertinent questions, and repeating every thing she heard from one to another.

EDWARD.

What an incorrigible girl! she was enough to set the whole world at variance.

RS. MANLY.

She was so indeed, Edward; and I think her mamma, knowing her disposition, was very much to blame to take her with her into another person's family; for having so often deceived her, and never having kept any of her promises of

amendment, she had certainly no reason to expect she would now be more exact than she had hitherto been: for my own part, I confess I lose all confidence in the promises of those who have once deceived me.

MR. MANLY.

It would have been well if Anna's mother had had your firmness, but she was weak enough to believe what she said; in consequence of which she brought much mortification and pain upon herself, which she might otherwise have avoided.

The lady, at whose house they were staying, had a son in the army, at that time on an expedition to Holland: she was, as may be naturally supposed, extremely anxious about him—he was the constant object of her thoughts; and the friends who were with her, endeavouring to make her see his situation in a less dangerous light than she imagined it to be, he was the chief subject of conversation; and the colonel, the colonel, so often rang in Anna's ears, that she had no idea of there being any other colonel in the world than the one in question.

Perceiving two young Ladies go into an arbour in the garden one evening, as she was walking near the house, and wishing, according to her usual custom, to hear their conversation, that she might have something to entertain the next person she met with, she slipped round by another walk, and crept gently behind them; but

was for some time disappointed, for they spoke so very low that she could not hear a single word.

At length one of them, rising to go, said, "I must write a letter before supper, so I will leave you my book to entertain you; and remember that we certainly will go to-morrow morning, and that we meet at the entrance of the wood."

"Very well," replied the other lady, "you may depend upon me: at six o'clock I will be there without fail."

So will I, thought Anna, for I am determined to know what secret expedition you are going upon.

She left her hiding place immediately, and went into the drawing room, where she had the greatest difficulty to hold her tongue, and longed to tell the company that the two young ladies had appointed to meet at six o'clock the following morning, to go to some place which she had not yet discovered the name of, and which she was sure they would not have known for the world, because they had retired to the most private arbour in the garden to settle their plan.

It was delightful to have all this to tell; but she recollected, that if she was so hasty she should never know where they were going, and must moreover confess that she had listened to their conversation: she therefore determined to take patience, and for the first time retired to her room with something untold upon her mind, and, which is equally surprising, the weight of such a secret did not disturb her rest; on the contrary, she slept

so soundly that when she awoke it was two hours past the time she intended to have been up.

She started from her bed with the utmost speed, was dressed in a few minutes, and flew to the wood. It was too late for the discovery she wished to make; a little boy, of whom she enquired, told her that two ladies had been there, but they had been gone through the wood, and over the hill, quite out of sight, a long, long time before she came.

Anna was so vexed that she almost shed tears; she never had met with such a disappointment, and was meditating on what she should do, when hearing voices near her, and hoping she might pick up something or other to talk of at breakfast, she followed the sound till, through a little opening among the trees, she perceived a woman sitting on a bank, in conversation with a soldier, who stood before her with a little child by his side. The woman appeared very much fatigued, and unwell: she spoke in a low voice, so that Anna could not distinguish what she said; but the soldier's answer was distinct enough. He begged her to be comforted, said they had not much farther to go, and that she well knew the colonel's bounty to him, when he was dying, would secure them for ever from future distress.

"The colonel!" exclaimed Anna, starting from her hiding place, "is the colonel dead?"—"Dead!" repeated the man, extremely surprised at her sudden appearance, "yes; he died in my arms in the field, and a better man never com-

manded a regiment," he added; but the latter part of his speech was lost upon Anna, for she staid to hear no more than the news of the colonel's death, with which (fearing it might be known either by newspapers or private accounts, before she reached the house) she flew like lightning into the breakfast room; and, in her haste to be the first to commuicate the melancholy tidings, never considered the dreadful consequences it might occasion, but repeated, almost breathless with eagerness, every word she had heard from the soldier.

The shock was so great that no one had the power of recollecting the little probability there was that the colonel mentioned by the soldier should be him whose safety interested them so much. The lady of the house was conveyed to her bed in strong convulsions, a physician was sent for, and the whole house was thrown into confusion.

In the mean time the old butler, who, though he loved his young master tenderly, was more calm than any of the family, went out in search of the soldier, who though he had quitted the spot where Anna had seen him, he easily overtook and, enquiring into the particulars, found that he was lately arrived, not from Holland, but from the East Indies, and that the colonel he spoke of to his wife had been killed in an action in that country.

This was joyful intelligence to every one; but the shock the poor lady had received affected her so much that her physician despaired of her life

for several days, and she was many months before she pefectly recovered her health.

I need not add that Anna's mother suffered little less on this occasion, and she saw so much danger in the dreadful propensity her daughter indulged herself in, that she carried her home immediately, fully determined that, till she got completely the better of it, she should never see any body out of her own family, or be suffered to stir beyond the walls of their garden.

SOPHY.

Oh! now I perceive why the soldier is there; and I suppose that dangerous Anna was behind the trees.

MRS. MANLY.

Her mother treated her with too much lenity: she deserved to be shut up like a wild beast, for it is impossible to foresee all the mischief which such a creature might occasion, if left at liberty.—But I believe it is near supper time, so help your father to put his lantern away.