

**THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF Q.Q. TO
A PERIODICAL WORK, WITH
SOME PIECES NOT BEFORE
PUBLISHED. IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649215102

The contributions of Q.Q. to a periodical work, with some pieces not before published. In two volumes. Vol. II by Jane Taylor

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JANE TAYLOR

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BY THE LATE

JANE TAYLOR.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

London:

PUBLISHED BY B. J. HOLDSWORTH,

18, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

1824.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF

Q. Q.

I.

THE SORE TONGUE.

THERE was a little girl called Fanny, who had the misfortune one day to bite her tongue as she was eating her breakfast. It hurt her so much that she could scarcely help crying; and even when the first smart was over it continued so sore that whenever she spoke it pained her considerably. Finding this to be the case, she said very pitifully to her mother, "Mamma, you can't think how it hurts me when I speak!" "Does it?" replied her mother, "then I'll tell you what I would advise you to do;—resolve all this day to say nothing but what is either *necessary* or *useful*; this will give your tongue a fine holiday, and may answer more purposes than one.

Fanny, knowing that she had the character

of being somewhat loquacious, could not help laughing at this; and said, "Well, I will try for once; so, mum; I am going to begin now, mamma."

MOTHER. Do so: and whenever you are beginning to speak, be sure you ask yourself whether what you were going to say was likely to be of any use, or whether it was necessary.

FANNY. Yes, yes, I will: but don't talk to me, mamma, for fear:—so saying, she screwed up her lips, and taking her work, sat for about five minutes as still as a mouse. She then looked up, smiled, and nodded at her mother, as much as to say "see how well I can hold my tongue," still screwing her lips very tight for fear she should speak. Soon however she began to feel a great inclination to say something; and was glad to recollect that if she could but think of any thing either useful or necessary, she might speak. Whereupon she endeavoured to find something to say that would come *within the act*. To aid her invention, she looked all round the room:—

FANNY. Mamma, don't you think the fire wants stirring? This question, she thought, savoured of both qualifications.

MOTHER. Not at present, my dear.

Then followed another long silence; for Fanny found it vastly more difficult than she had any

previous idea of, to think of any thing useful to talk about; and she knew her mamma would laugh at her if she said what was obviously idle or silly, just now. She was beginning to repent having made such an agreement, when her three elder sisters entered the room. She now thought it quite reasonable, if not absolutely *necessary*, to tell them of her misfortune, which she did at considerable length, and with many needless digressions; (the usual custom with great talkers :) upon which they all laughed; prophesying that her resolution would not last half an hour; and rallying her for telling such a long story with a sore tongue.

Soon after, some ladies called to pay their mother a morning visit. This gave Fanny's tongue such a long rest, that the moment they were gone it seemed irresistibly to resume its wonted functions.

FANNY. What a while old Mrs. W. has had that brown satin pelisse! Really, poor old lady, I am quite tired of seeing her in it!

MOTHER. How is your tongue, Fanny?

FANNY. O, better, mamma, thank you, almost well.

MOTHER. I am sorry for it: I was in hopes it would have been sore enough at least to prevent your making impertinent remarks upon any body all this day.

FANNY. No but really, mamma, is not it an old rubbishing thing?

MOTHER. I don't know, indeed; it is no business of mine; therefore I took no notice of it.

A silence ensued after this: but conversation revived when Caroline, who had stood for some time with her eyes fixed on their opposite neighbour's window, suddenly exclaimed, "I do believe the Jones's are going to have company again to day! the servant has just been lighting the fire in the drawing-room; and there is Miss Jones now gone up to dress; I saw her draw down the blinds in her room this instant." "So she is," said Lucy, looking up: "I never knew such people in my life! they are always having company."

"I wonder who they are expecting to day," said Eliza, "dinner company, I suppose."

The proceedings of their neighbours, the Jones's continued to furnish matter for various sagacious conjectures and remarks for a considerable time: at length Caroline exclaimed with the eagerness of discovery,—

"Look! look! there's the baker now at the door, with a whole tray full of tarts and things: make haste, or he'll be gone in."

LUCY. So he is, I declare; it is a dinner-party then: well, we shall see presently, I hope; who are coming.

CAROLINE. O no, they never dine till five, when they have company.

ELIZA. And it will be dark then; how tiresome!

LUCY. If Miss Jones is not dressed already! she is this instaut come into the drawing room.

CAROLINE. Stand back, stand back! don't let her see us all staring: ah, there she is;—got on her pink sarcenet body and sleeves to day:—how pretty that dress is, to be sure!

ELIZA. And how nicely she has done her hair; look Caroline,—braided behind.

LUCY. There, she is putting down the sash. That chimney smokes, I know, with this wind.

FANNY. And there is that little figure, Martha Jones, come down now: do look, as broad as she is long: what a little fright that child is, to be sure!

MOTHER. Pray, Fanny, was that remark,—*useful or necessary?*

FANNY. O but mamma, I assure you, my tongue is quite well now.

MOTHER. I am sorry for it, my dear. Do you know, I should think it well worth while to bite my tongue every day, if there were no other means of keeping it in order.

At this the girls laughed; but their mother resuming her gravity, thus continued:

“My dear girls, I should before now have put

a stop to this idle gossiping, if I had not hoped to convince you of the folly of it. It is no wonder, I confess, that at your age you should learn to imitate a style of remark, which is but too prevalent in society.—Nothing indeed is more contagious: but let me also tell you, that girls of your age, and of your *advantages*, are capable of seeing the meanness of it; and ought to despise it. It is the chief end of education, to raise the minds of women above such trifling as this. But if a young person who has been taught to *think*, whose taste has been cultivated, and who might therefore possess internal resources, has as much idle curiosity about the affairs of her neighbours, and is as fond of retailing petty scandal concerning them, as an uneducated woman, it proves that her mind is incurably mean and vulgar, and that cultivation is lost upon her.

“This sort of gossiping, my dear girls, is the disgrace of our sex. The pursuits of women lying necessarily within a narrow sphere, they naturally sink, unless raised by refinement, or by strong principle, into that *littleness of character*, for which, even their own husbands and fathers (if they are men of sense) are tempted to despise them. The minds of men, from their engagements in business, necessarily take a larger range; and they are, in general, too much occupied with concerns comparatively important, to enter into