

**THE TEMPERANCE LADDER: A
FEW STEPS IN THE RIGHT
DIRECTION FOR THOSE ON THE
LOOK-OUT FOR DIALOGUES
AND RECITATIONS**

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The Temperance Ladder: A Few Steps in the Right Direction for Those on the Look-Out for Dialogues and Recitations by T. H. Evans

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T. H. EVANS

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A few Steps in the Right Direction

FOR THOSE ON THE LOOK-OUT FOR

DIALOGUES AND RECITATIONS.

By T. H. EVANS.

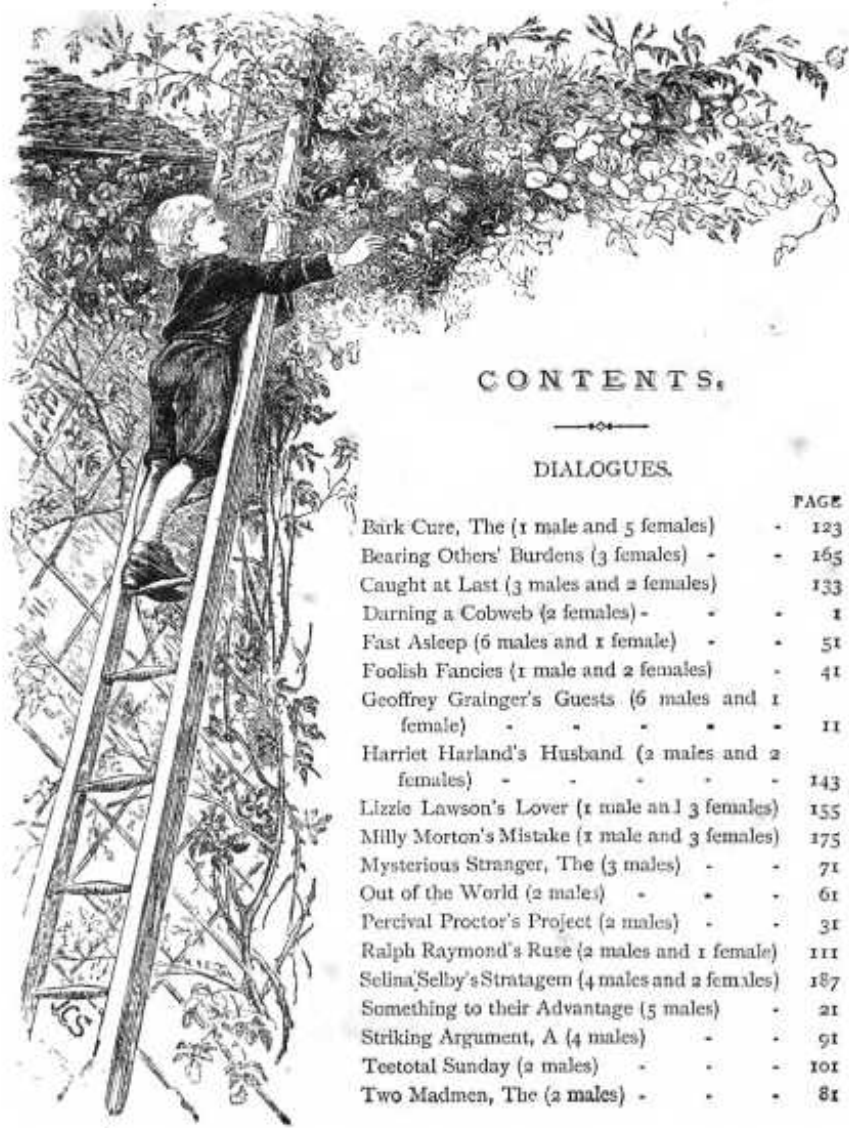
'There is a want too much lost sight of in our estimate of the privations of the humble classes, though it is one of the most incessant craving of all our wants, and is actually the impelling power which, in the vast majority of cases, urges men into vice and crime. It is the want of amusement.'

SIR JOHN HERSCHEL.

London :

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DARNING A COBWEB.



CHARACTERS:

FLORENCE *A Teetotaler.*
ETHEL... .. *A Moderate Drinker.*

SCENE.

(*Sitting room: FLORENCE seated at the table sewing.*)

FLORENCE (*talking to herself.*) I wonder if Ethel will call this evening. She is such a nice girl, and does a deal of good in the neighbourhood, especially among the poor. I do hope she will come. (*Humming :*)

“Will you walk into my parlour,” said the spider to the fly ;
“’Tis the prettiest little ——”

(*Examining her needlework.*) There now ! I declare if I haven’t done this all wrong. No, no, ’tis right after all, so it is. I wish I could induce Ethel to sign the Pledge. I have a nice little trap laid for her next time she calls. She owns that intoxicating drink is productive of much evil, but the wilful little tease will maintain, in spite of all I can say to the contrary, that it is only mischievous when used in excessive quantities. So all her efforts are directed towards palliating the evil by advocating moderation, instead of seeking to remove it entirely by total abstinence. (*Listening*) Hark ! here she comes. (*Aside*) Now, Miss Spider, look out ! for the fly is on the watch. [*Enter ETHEL.*] F. (*Humming as if she did not see her :*)

“Will you walk into my parlour,” said the spider to the fly ;
 “Tis the prettiest little parlour that ever you did spy.”

ETHEL. Good evening, Florence, you seem quite merry to-night.

F. (*Rising; they shake hands*). Oh, Ethel! I'm so pleased to see you. Come along and sit down and tell me all the news. (*They seat themselves*).

E. Well, and how have you been all this long time? (*Noticing Flo.'s work.*) Oh! I say, you are doing that nicely. It will look lovely when it is finished.

F. Do you really think it looks nice? I'm so glad you are pleased with it. How is the Association for Mitigating the Evils of Intemperance getting on?

E. Well, dear, we've hardly started yet. We have got out the prospectus, and the bill for our opening meeting, and I expect we shall do such a lot of good, a great deal more than the teetotalers are doing. They go too far.

F. But, Ethel, dear, we only keep away from that which proves itself to be productive of evil. Surely that is common sense?

E. But, Florence, the evil is not apparent when drink is properly used, so our society has for its objects the proper regulation of the whole matter, that wine and beer may be used by all classes in a decent and temperate manner, as other things are that shopkeepers sell. And to induce folks to be temperate and orderly in their lives, we advocate Working Men's Clubs, Public Drinking Fountains, Early Closing, Improved Dwellings, and lots of other good things, calculated to elevate the working man and keep him away from those temptations and influences that so often lead him to drink more than is good for him.

F. In short, you believe that drunkenness is the one great besetting sin of the working classes, and you are willing to try every scheme that can be devised to save them from this curse, except the one simple and only true remedy, viz.—

Total Abstinence from that which engenders all the evil we deplore. Why not do without the drink altogether?

E. Oh dear, Oh dear! Flo! what an aggravating little puss you are, to be sure. It is really quite wicked of you to go on in that manner. Are not the barley and the grapes a part of creation? good things that God has given us to use and not abuse? We have no right to try and do away with such things, as it has pleased God to place them in our midst. You know very well that Teetotalism would never have been heard of but for Drunkenness. Well, then, if we can only induce the people to live temperately and moderately with regard to these things, drunkenness will disappear at once. This is what our Society intends, and we mean to do it too.

F. Oh Ethel, you have set yourselves a difficult task!

E. Well, perhaps we have. But come to our inaugural meeting, and if you have anything to say, we shall be glad to hear it.

F. I mean to come, for I heard that discussion would be invited, so I have written out this little incident (*taking MS. from her pocket*) to illustrate my objection to your schemes, for I am no speaker, but I can read it to the meeting, can't I?

E. Oh! yes, of course you can. But do let me hear it now!

F. Very well, I'll read it. "There was once a very hard-working and industrious fellow living in the neighbourhood of London, called John Tidy. His wife was a perfect model of industry and cleanliness. She had, it is true, certain peculiar notions of her own respecting household matters, but as her intentions were good—for she was the most well-meaning woman that ever lived—why, no one took any notice of her odd ways, not even her husband. She was for ever putting things straight, arranging her work, and tidying up the place. In fact, she was such a slave to her notions of neatness and good order, that if a poor little spider chanced to take possession of ever such an out-of-the-way corner, in any part of her house, and there spin his web, she soon found out the little intruder, and would exclaim, "O dear! oh dear! when will

these tiresome spiders learn to spin their webs properly. They are always so full of holes, it makes the place look so ragged and untidy, I can't bear to see them. Both the tiresome little pests! they keep me for ever employed;" and down the untiring little body would sit on a stool in the corner of the room, and taking out a very small needle, thread it with the finest silk, and proceed forthwith to carefully and neatly darn every hole in the spider's web. When her task was finished she would throw herself back in an admiring attitude, and exclaim, "There! that looks something like now: once more the place is made neat and tidy, and how long will it keep so, I wonder?" Then up she would jump and——'

E. Here, stop a bit, Florence, stop a bit. Is this someone living in Colney Hatch, that you are talking about?

F. Oh dear no!

E. Well, it looks very much like it. Why didn't the silly creature sweep the nasty things away altogether, instead of losing her time in that idiotic way? They are of no use!

F. How do we know they are of 'no use?' They are a part of creation. God created these wonderful little creatures and taught them how to weave their marvellous webs. So you see, Ethel dear——

E. Get along with your nonsense, do. I haven't patience to listen to you. I shall fancy that you are becoming as great a ninny as Mrs. Tidy, if you go on like that. The way to make the house clean and decent is to sweep all such dirty and useless things away, not *patch* them. Who ever heard of such a thing as darning a cobweb!

F. Oh! then you really do think that to adopt such a course would be a foolish waste of time?

E. Certainly I do! No woman in her senses would act so ridiculously.

F. Then if this is true of Mrs. Tidy, what shall we say of those who would darn up the trap-holes in the Alcoholic spider's web, when by one stroke with the broom of total abstinence it may be swept away altogether.