

HUMOROUS. STRATAGEM FOR A DINNER.

The following characteristic anecdote of Theodore Hook is given in Barnham's life of that extraordinary man. One of the streets near Soho Square, either Dean street, or Frith street, was the scene of action. Hook was lounging up one of those streets in company with Terry, the actor, when they saw through a kitchen window preparations for a handsome dinner.

"What a feast!" said Terry—"Jolly dogs! I should like to make one of them." "I'll take any bet," returned Hook, "that I do; call for me here at ten o'clock, and you'll find that I shall be able to give a tolerable account of the worthy gentleman's champagne and venison."

So saying he marched up the steps, gave an authoritative rap with the furnished knocker, and was quickly lost to the sight of his astonished companion. As a matter of course he was immediately ushered by the servant, as an unexpected guest, into the drawing room, where a large party had already assembled. The apartment being well nigh full, no notice was at first taken of his intrusion, and half a dozen people were laughing at his *bon mots* before the host discovered the mistake. Affecting not to observe the visible embarrassment of the latter, and ingeniously avoiding the opportunity for explanation, Hook rattled on till he had attracted the greater part of the company in a circle near him, and some considerable time elapsed ere the old gentleman was able to catch the attention of the agreeable stranger.

"I beg your pardon," he said, contriving at last to get in a word; "but your name, sir—I did not quite catch it—servants are so abominable incorrect, and I am really at a loss."

"Don't apologize, I beg," graciously replied Theodore. "Smith—my name is Smith—and as you justly observe, servants are always making some stupid blunder or another. I remember a remarkable instance, &c."

"But really, my dear sir," continued the host, at the termination of the story illustrative of stupidity in servants, "I think the mistake on the present occasion does not originate in the source you allude to, I certainly did not expect the pleasure of Mr. Smith's company at dinner to-day."

"No, I dare say not; you said four in your note I know, and it is now, I see, a quarter past five—you are a little fast, by the way; but the fact is, I have been detained in the city, and I was about to explain when—"

"Pray," exclaimed the other, as soon as he could stay the volubility of his guest, "whom, may I ask, do you suppose you are addressing?"

"Why, Mr. Thompson, of course—old friend of my father; I have not the pleasure, indeed, of being personally known to you, but having received your kind invitation on my arrival from Liverpool—Frith street, four o'clock, family party—come in boots—you see I have taken you at your word. I am only afraid I have kept you waiting."

"No, no, not at all. But permit me to observe, my dear sir, my name is not exactly Thompson—it is Jones, and—"

"Jones!" repeated the self-styled Smith. "Why surely I cannot have—yes, I must—good heavens! I see it all. My dear sir what an unfortunate blunder—wrong house—what must you think of such an intrusion? I am really at a loss for words in which to apologize. You will permit me to retire at present, and to-morrow—"

"Pray don't think of retiring," exclaimed the hospitable old gentleman; "your friend's table must have been cleared long ago, if, as you say, four was the hour named; and I am only too happy to be able to offer you a seat at mine."

Hook, of course, could not think of any such thing—could not think of trespassing upon the kindness of a perfect stranger; if too late for Thompson, there was plenty of chop houses on hand. The unfortunate part of the business was, he had made an appointment with a gentleman to call for him at ten o'clock. The good-natured Jones, however, positively refused to allow so entertaining a visitor to depart dinnerless. Mrs. Jones joined in the solicitation, and the *Miss Jones* smiled bewitchingly, and at last Mr. Smith, who soon recovered from his confusion, was prevailed upon to offer his arm to one of the ladies and take his place at the well-furnished board.

In all probability the family of Jones never passed such an evening before. Hook naturally exerted himself to the utmost to keep the party in an unceasing roar of laughter, and made good the first impression. The mirth grew fast and furious when, by way of a *coup de grace*, he seated himself at the pianoforte and struck off into one of those extemporaneous effusions which had filled mere critical judges than the Jones's with delight and astonishment. Ten o'clock struck, and on Mr. Terry being announced, his triumphant friend wound up the performance with the explanatory stanza—

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