

see, Evelyn could not come; and I hope you have no superstition about being the thirteenth at table."

No, certainly, he had no such scruple; and the hostess turned, still smiling, to close up the rear, when a sudden confusion arose in the ranks before her.

"Indeed it is of no consequence at all. No, I am not unwell—I am very well indeed. But I had rather not go in to dinner."

"Why, Laura," cried the hostess, pressing forward, what is the matter? You must be feeling unwell."

"Oh no! not at all, thanks; but I dined at luncheon; and I'd rather, much rather, wait in the drawing-room and have some tea."

"But why? This is very strange. You were going in to dinner with us all just now. Do tell us what is the reason for this sudden change of plan."

"Well, then—I know you'll laugh at me, but I can't help it—only I wouldn't, for all the world, sit down thirteen at table."

Arguing, partly banter, but passing into impatience, supervened. The young lady, however, continued obdurate. The soup stood untasted, the turbot grew cold; the lady of the house fought against irritability; the young lady was as obstinate as a mule. She was pressing back into the drawing-room. The gentleman who had been about to follow the procession here stepped forward, exclaiming, "I fear I am the unhappy cause of all the trouble, from my having come with no notice. The interloper being removed, the harmony of the party will be restored." And, with a courteous "good-night" to the hostess, before a word could be said he had taken his hat and coat, and pressed out into the inhospitable night, dinnerless.

The hostess, who, as it happened, would rather have spared any other of her guests than this one, to whom, for many reasons, she wished to show particular attention;