

**OUR VISITORS AND
HOW TO
AMUSE THEM**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649418299

Our Visitors and How to Amuse Them by Fred. Davis

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FRED. DAVIS

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HOW TO
AMUSE THEM**

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HOW TO AMUSE THEM.

BY
FRED. DAVIS

"Here you'll be ever sure to meet
A hearty welcome though no treat,
One who has nothing else to do,
But to divert himself and you."

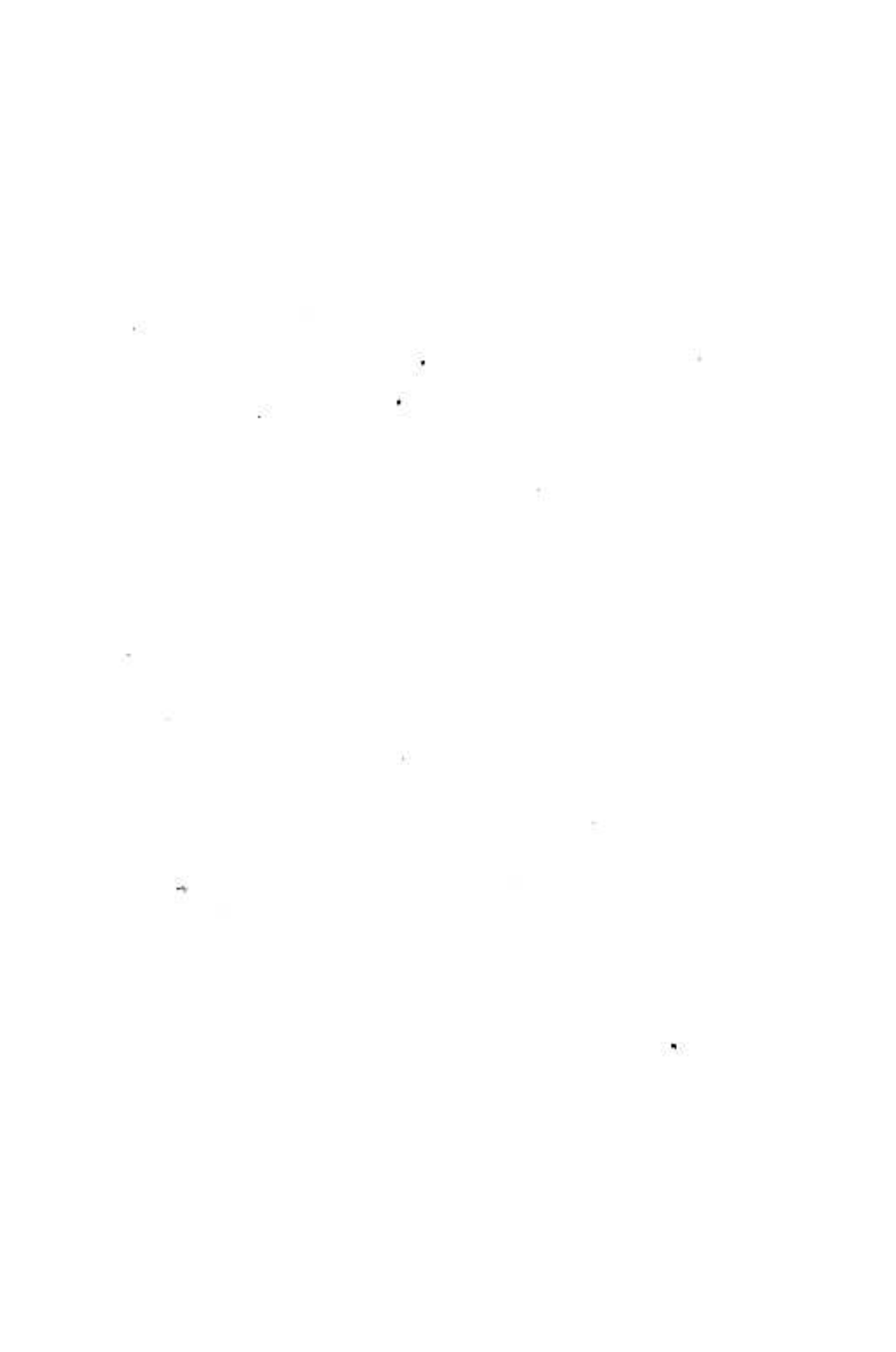
Soame Jenyns.



LONDON
HOULSTON AND SONS,
PATERNOSTER SQUARE.

1881.

268. c. 613.





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I.

TO THE READER.



DINGLE, dingle, dingle.

"Who's that I wonder? Oh! the Joneses. Bother, how I wish they had selected another evening for their visit. I wanted particularly to look into that new book, and now suppose I shan't get a chance!"

Dear Reader, have you never made an observation like this when some unexpected visitor arrived and upset the plan for your evening's recreation? I am afraid you will feel constrained to admit the fact. Yet why do so many of us feel annoyed when visitors are announced? Why do we think them bores, and wish they had staid away? It is because we have not acquired the knack of mutual entertainment—that beautiful art of discovering and drawing out what is good in them, and of making a reciprocal offering. An art inborn in some people, but which all can acquire by "setting their minds" to the task.

Think how horrible life would be if deprived of its friendships. As Sydney Smith says very beautifully, "Life is fortified by many friendships. To love, and to be loved, is the greatest happiness of existence. If I lived under the burning sun of the equator, it would be a pleasure to me to think that there were many human beings on the other side of the world who regarded and respected me; I could and would not live if I were alone upon the earth, and cut off from the remembrance of my fellow creatures. It is not that a man has occasion often to fall back upon the kindness of his friends; perhaps he may never experience the necessity of doing so; but we are governed by our imaginations, and they stand there as a solid and impregnable bulwark against all the evils of life."

Then, again, you cannot but remember some very pleasant evenings you have spent at friends' houses—evenings when the time flew away unheeded, when the mind was delighted, when the wit was stimulated, when the whole soul was roused—occasions which will never be forgotten, and which stand out clear and shining in the memory like bright particular stars in the firmament above. Can you, then, deny to your friends the same happiness? Can you not feel that by a small expenditure of time and trouble you may do them a great pleasure, and give them subjects for like happy memories?

In order to be social you may have to give up several indulgences, and deny yourself some pleasures; but think how large a return you obtain for these outlays, and how much real satisfaction you will obtain—how much information you will gather, how much better and nobler a being you will be for the process. One of the chief causes of our advancement as a nation springs from the increase of our intercommunication, bringing together, as it does, supply and demand—old failings and new means of overcoming them; so in the same way our progress individually may spring from finding in other people's minds the knowledge which is lacking in our own, from avoiding the pitfalls into which they may have been betrayed, and by learning from their bright examples how to achieve success ourselves.

To point out some of the fallacies and quicksands of visiting, and to suggest a few methods of correcting and avoiding them, are the objects of this work, in which everyone, I hope, will find some means of rendering the visits of their friends not only pleasant, but valuable.





II.

HOSPITALITY: ITS PLEASURES AND DUTIES.

" Fill every beaker up, my men,
Pour forth the cheering wine ;
There's life and strength in every drop,
Thanksgiving to the vine."

A. G. Greene.

HAN is a gregarious animal. He likes to meet and have a gossip. No matter whether on the weather, business, politics, science, or art, everybody has something to say and something to hear. Was it not Coleridge who said of a man who scarcely ever spoke, " He thinks just as little ? " Our boasted power of speech would be useless if we could never get any listeners. We like to compare notes with sympathetic friends ; " the soldier likes to shoulder his crutch and show how fields were won ; " the chemist likes to tell of the new substance he has won from the refuse of other's labours ; the painter likes to describe the triumphs of æsthetic art, and the new opinions of colour. There is a story told of a young gentleman who remarked to an aged friend that he was leaving college as he " had finished his education," whereupon his friend said that he was surprised to hear it, for he " was only just commencing his." We have always something to learn, and very often, like the pearl-seeker, in the most unlikely spot we shall find the most beautiful gem.

But though everyone will admit in the abstract that hospitality is a charming thing in its way, yet people differ greatly as to the mode in which it should find expression at their hands. Who has not, at some time or other, for instance, been present at a dinner party where nearly all the guests were strangers to each other ; where everything was of the newest and most unfamiliar descrip-