

Fulham
Wed. 5/18
1840

My dear Sir

For say Sunday a your
day - he may not Tuesday
to your morning - can you
come to me on Tuesday
about 12 - he could
take over our costume - and
at 1. I expect a young
Philosopher - one of the best

extraordinary person I
ever saw - never having
seen him before -
he will be here about the
lunches at two - and
although he longer you stay
the better pleased I shall
be if you are prepared
by association - you may

do the you please - If
you are at home say you are
pay of the bearer - and
ask him to get a letter
at the Mercurium tomorrow
when I shall be about
there

Yr very faithfully
Theodore Post

The Hook

Hook, Theodore Edward, *hook*, a popular humorist and playwright at the beginning of the present century, son of James Hook, the musical composer, was remarkable in his youth for his beauty, his sweet voice, and his quick intelligence. He soon began to assist his father by writing the words of ballads for him, and was thus early made familiar with musical and theatrical life before and behind the curtain. He had been at Harrow for a short period; but on the death of his mother he left it, and never went to a school again. It was at one time intended to enter him at a college at Oxford; but, after some preliminary reading, he returned to London, where he quickly began to write operas, farces, and published a novel, "The Man of Sorrow," under an assumed name. His light and joyous temperament, great conversational powers, and marvellous talent as an "improvisatore," made him the favourite of the most fashionable society; and it was while he was leading this life of exuberant gaiety that he played off his notorious "hoaxes;" one of which, "The Berners Street hoax," made a great sensation at the time. His social qualities attracted the notice, and procured for him the patronage of the Prince Regent, who caused him, in 1812, to be appointed accountant general and treasurer to the Mauritius, he being then only 25 years of age. But in March, 1818, he was arrested on a serious charge, a deficiency of 37,000 dollars having been discovered in the colonial treasury chest.

his charge, but great carelessness was proved against him, it being shown, among other acts of culpable neglect, that he was in the habit of leaving the keys of the treasure-chest with his subordinates while he was away on parties of pleasure. Between the years 1824 and 1836 he wrote about thirty volumes of novels, which were very successful, and which yielded him large sums. He continued to lead the life of a gay and fashionable man till July, 1841, when, as he looked in the glass, when dining, he rose and said, "Ay, I see I look as I am; done up in purse, in mind, and in body too, at last." Henceforth he was confined to his room; his fine constitution and his great intellectual powers had been worn out by the merciless mode in which he had overtaxed them. His novel of "Gilbert Gurney" contains an interesting autobiographical sketch of himself. B. in London, Sept. 22, 1788; D. at Fulham, Aug. 24, 1841.

Theodore Hook, his Sayings and Doings, with Anecdotes of Contemporaneous Wits." There was a crowded audience, presided over by W. H. Peters, Esq., of Marefield.

Lord LENNOX, who was warmly received, after a few introductory remarks, said it could not be believed that the author of "Sayings and Doings" stood in jeopardy of passing away rapidly from the memory of man; for so long as a taste for the lighter works of fiction endured, "Gilbert Gurney" and "Jack Brag" must ever take high place and precedence in every library. But any estimate of the powers of Theodore Hook, drawn from his writings alone, must be inadequate and erroneous. As a novelist, he had been often equalled, and occasionally surpassed; and whatever the eminence to which his published works had raised him, it was as nothing compared with the position which, by virtue of his varied talents, and his brilliant and unflagging wit, had been unhesitatingly conceded to him in society. As an improvisatore, he was unapproachable. But it was precisely in these, its higher qualities, that his genius could not be appreciated, save by those who knew him. The father of the subject of the lecture, Mr. James Hook, the well-known composer, was a native of Norwich. After being an organist in one of the churches of his native city, and subsequently being engaged at the Marylebone Gardens, he finally settled at Vauxhall. Theodore Edward Hook was born on the 22nd September, 1788, in Charlotte-street, Bedford Square, London. He went to school first in Soho Square, was next sent to a Doctor Curtis, at Lynton, in Cambridgeshire, and soon afterwards he was transferred to Harrow, but returned home on the death of his mother in 1802. His father was persuaded not to send him back to school, and ere long his talents for singing and song-writing were turned to account by the composer. Thus Theodore, while but a youth of sixteen, had the misfortune to have the *entrée* of the theatre, to be the pet of the green-room, and the indulged companion of a light-hearted race of singers, actresses, and players. Eventually, Theodore Hook was entered at Balliol College, Oxford. After a residence of one, or at most a couple of terms, Hook quitted Oxford. Upon his return to London, the name of Theodore Hook became most notorious, for the series of practical jokes or hoaxes, which inexcusable as they must be considered, were so inexpressibly ludicrous in effect, as well as original in conception, and were carried out with so unparalleled a degree of impudence, as to provoke the dullest of mortals to mirth. Hook commenced—as a very young man of course—with the establishment of a museum, which boasted the most complete collection of knockers, the finest specimens of sign-painting, the most magnificent bunches of grapes, the longest barbers' poles, and the largest cocked hats that the Metropolis could produce. (Laughter.) One of his most successful achievements was the carrying off a gigantic Highlander from the door of a tobacconist's shop. These jokes culminated in the best known and most daring—the Berners-street hoax, perpetrated in 1809, which the noble lecturer related with infinite humour. In the art of punning Hook had no rival. His fun was exuberant and spontaneous, and a sure test of the absence of artifice was that he thoroughly revelled in it himself. His puns had the merit of undoubted originality, unequivocal novelty, and instantaneous explosion. Lord Lennox himself once went down with Hook to Epsom, and during the whole journey he kept up a regular running fire of pun, anecdote, song, and improvise. On the way his Lordship asked if he had seen in the morning's paper that the Exeter Theatre was burnt down, whereupon Hook readily replied, "Oh, yes, quite dramatic; *enter a fire, exit a theatre.*" In 1813 Theodore Hook was presented with an appointment, which promised to place him in easy circumstances for the remainder of his life—that of Accountant-General and Treasurer at Mauritius—worth about £2,000 per annum. There for nearly five years he led a life of the greatest dissipation, squandering thousands of pounds away in gambling upon the race-course, which led to a deficiency in his accounts, and defalcations amounting to £12,885. Hook was sent to England, and on landing at Portsmouth, a writ was issued, he was arrested, and lodged in Shire Lane, London. He was set at liberty in 1825, without in any way being exonerated from his liability to the debt. The most important event with which the name of Theodore Hook stood connected was, without question, the establishment of the *John Bull* newspaper, and the universal, instantaneous, and appreciable effect produced on the great political movements of the day by the appearance of that journal was probably without a parallel. The paper set out with one specific object—the extinction of Queen Caroline's party, known as the Brandenburg House party—and to accomplish this, Hook's varied talents, his wit and humour, his sarcasm and bitterness, his keenness of argument, fiery zeal, and unscrupulous daring, were all brought to bear with concentrated energy upon the ranks of the opposition. The success of *John Bull* was complete and unexampled, but its occupation was gone on the death of the Queen in 1821. Mr. Hume, the great financial reformer, then became a favourite butt. To these political squibs succeeded "Mrs. Ramsbottom's Letters," and Theodore by degrees abandoned himself to what after all was the natural bent of his humour, jovial, joyous, extravagant, now rising to the most pointed wit, now descending to the broadest farce, occasionally diverging into personality, but ceasing to betray malice or bitterness in his mirth. Hook's exuberance of fun, which was irrepressible, often led him to commit actions and indulge in personal satire perfectly unjustifiable. Among the many conversational men of the day—the intellectual giants of a generation almost passed by, whom Hook was in the habit of meeting—were George Colman, James Smith, the Rev. Richard Barham (Ingholdsby), the Rev. Edward Cannon, and Horace Twiss. In summing up the character of Hook, the noble lecturer said he would not attempt to palliate his errors; to do so would be most culpable. His career was chequered with faults of a grave nature; in addition to which it would be difficult to point to any individual whose dissipations had been marked by such reckless imprudence.