

Cases of Mistaken Identity

A GENTLEMAN who lives in Brooklyn has had for years a “double” who has given him much trouble. He never saw his “double,” and his “double,” so far as he himself knows, has never seen him. But there is a continual game of cross-purposes. Calling the original A, he finds that B has been mistaken for him time and again, and *vice versa* – as, for example, when A was reproached by a lady friend for having passed her without recognition, although she had bowed to him and spoken his name, he was able to satisfy her that at that particular hour of that particular day, instead of being in New York, he was in Philadelphia.

A similar story is told by an English writer, in a humorous vein, in one of the October periodicals. He says:

My name is Withers – Richard Withers, of Jermyn Street, London, ostensibly an importer. I am not Blobbs of Wadham; that is what I wish to be clearly understood. In the year eighteen hundred and fifty, or thereabouts, the great firm of Nature and Company, falling short, I suppose, in their original material, issued a couple of duplicates – *fac-similies* – and I had the misfortune to be one of them. We were not twins: there was no mystic sympathy of being between us to whisper to each other, “Thou hast a double;” nothing in the slightest degree to suggest that there was a ditto somewhere.

My first introduction to a knowledge of the other twin was some few years ago. As I was walking along the street, on my way to business, I was saluted from behind with a most tremendous thwack across the shoulders. I turned round, angry, and an utter stranger, with an outstretched hand and beautiful smile, confronted me.

“Delighted to see you, old boi,” said he. “How is the woife and the piccanninies?”

“Sir,” I replied, rubbing my back as well as I was able, “I am a bachelor.”

“D’ye mean to say you are not Blobbs?” said he.

“Certainly I do, sir,” answered I, with warmth.

“Well, then, it’s nothing more nor less than a coincidence,” said he.

“Sir,” said I, “it’s a blister.” And it was a blister.

The very next day, and almost at the same place, I received two thwacks across the shoulders from that identical cane, and in the same unmistakable Hibernian accents, I heard it shouted: “I took another man for you yesterday; but bedad, I’ve got you today!”

I happened to have a nephew at college at the time; and I went down to stay with him for a week. I had heard a good deal before of the hospitality of the University, but the cordial manner of the Fellows did surprise me to a considerable extent.

“Well, how are you, old boy? So you have come down to see us at last?” exclaimed one, at the very gate, as he shook my hand most heartily. “But you are getting bald, and you’re shorter than you were, too, a good deal.”

“Really, sir,” I began, “these familiar remarks...” But my nephew came up just at that moment and prevented any explanation. I was placed next to the sub-warden after dinner, and was treated with all imaginable kindness.

“Blobbs, you used to be bad at chapels, bad at lectures, but always good-tempered and ready to take a joke.”

“Gentlemen,” exclaimed I, “I am not Blobbs!”

Alas, it was but little good for me to say it. I went out to breakfast at another college, and got myself purposely introduced to everybody as Richard Withers; but the association of ideas proved almost as bad as the confusion of persons, for I was asked about six times whether I knew Blobbs.

The various disadvantages of my resemblance to this person have been [counterbalanced] by no benefits; nobody has ever paid me money for Blobbs, or asked me to dinner, or given me so much as a lift in his carriage.

After a few score of mistakes had happened, I learned to take them quietly enough; if I was arrested for debt, or even got lodged in prison for murder, it would not much distress me. “It’s Blobbs,” I should say; “that’s all.” I never saw the parody upon myself in all my life, although occasionally I must have been very nearly coming across him. What a shocking business it will be when one of us dies! Perhaps we shall expire simultaneously.

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