

HARDCASTLE, DIGGORY, ROGER, THOMAS, HANAH

HARDCASTLE: Well I hope you are perfect in the table exercises I have been teaching you for the last three days. You all know your posts and your places, and can show that you have been used to good company, without ever stirring from home?

ALL: Ay. Oh yes. *(lots of nods and affirmations)*

HARDCASTLE: When company comes, you are not to pop out and stare, and then run in again like frightened rabbits in a warren.

ALL: No, no. *(lots of shaking of heads)*

HARDCASTLE: You, Diggory, who I have taken from the barn, are to make a show at the side-table; and you, Roger, whom I have advanced from the plough, are to place yourself behind my chair. But you're not to stand so, with your hands in your pockets. Take your hands from your pockets, Roger, and from your head, you blockhead you. See how Diggory carries his hands. They're a little too stiff, indeed, but that's no great matter.

DIGGORY; Ay, mind how I hold them. I learned to hold my hands this way when I was upon drill for the militia. *(he holds hands vewry stiffly, fingers splayed at his side. The other servants copy.)* And so being upon drill –

HARDCASTLE: You must not be so talkative, Diggory. You must be all attention to the guests. You must hear us talk, and not think of talking; you must see us drink, and not think of drinking; you must see us eat, and not think of eating.

DIGGORY: By the laws, your worship, that's perfectly impossible. Whenever Diggory sees eating going forward, lud, he's always wishing for a mouthful himself.

HARDCASTLE: Blockhead! Is not a belly-full in the kitchen as good as a belly-full in the parlour? Stay your stomach with that reflection.

DIGGORY: Lud, I thank your worship,. I'll make a shift to stay my stomach with a slice of cold beef in the pantry.

HARDCASTLE: Diggory, you are too talkative – Then, if I happen to say a good thing, or tell a good story at table, you must not all burst out a-laughing as if you made part of the company.

DIGGORY: Then your worship must not tell the story of Old Grouse in the gun-room. I can't help laughing at that – he, he, he! – for the soul of me. We have laughed at that these twenty years, ha, ha, ha!

*(all fall about laughing)*

HARDCASTLE: Ha, ha, ha! The story is a good one. Well, honest Diggory, you may laugh at that – but still remember to be attentive. Suppose one of the company should call for a glass of wine, how will you behave? Get into your positions. *(much to-ing and fro-ing till they sort themselves out) Hardcastle sits at the table)* A glass of wine, sir, if you please. Ahem! *(No-one takes any notice at all. To Diggory)* Eh – why don't you move?

DIGGORY: Eh, your worship, I never have courage till I see the eatables and drinkables brought upon the table, then I'm as bold as a lion.