

FURTHER DOINGS OF THE MAJOR.

By F. BLAKE CROFTON.

(Author of "The Major's Big Talk Stories," "The Bewildered Quakers," &c.)

A MUSICAL TYRANT.

"Oh, many a wicked smile he smole
And many a wink he wunk;
And, oh! it was a fearful thing
To think the thoughts he thunk!"

This same king of the Lotolies practised some ingenious cruelties. One day as he was enjoying the gentle exercise of administering the bastinado, he was struck by the great variety of tone in the groans of his victims. So he commanded his carpenter to construct wooden stocks, to confine (soles upwards) the feet of eight captives who were in the habit of groaning promptly when hit by the rod, and whose different notes of pain formed a complete octave. He had a second frame constructed for eight more wretches whose average groans ranged about an octave higher. On this human harp, as he observed with an inhuman chuckle, he intended to play solo-stirring tunes!

He began to practice the national air, a very simple melody. He tried with a temporary success to regulate the length of the note by the violence of the blow, and hoped soon to be able to strike quavers, crotchets, and all the other notes, at will. At first indeed he signally failed in bringing out the shorter notes, for the poor fellows, hitherto accustomed to nothing but hard hits, howled loud and long on the descent of every blow alike. Soon, however, the cries grew nearly proportional to the blows. But this was the case for a short time only, for before the performance had satisfied King Pip the instrument was hopelessly out of tune. Some of the animated notes were sounding incessantly; others were insensible, and did not sound at all.

In vain the baffled tyrant replaced these injured notes by fresh ones; in vain he tried new arrangements of the captives and the lookers-on. He never could manage to produce the national air without some discord. "At least I have invented footnotes!" said the unprincipled Pip.

Then he plied his rod rapidly all round, and stalked away in a little better humour, for a grand vocal *finale* was ringing in his ears.

"I have a rod in pickle for you!" muttered an agile chief, scowling after the tyrant, and with difficulty restraining his noble rage, which was one day to burst out in open defiance. "You've turned the national air of Lotoli into a dirge; but you'll quaver for this crotchet yet!"

The indignant chief was Tehee. He had punned in bitter irony only, for he scorned the puns and other vices of that corrupt court.

"PASSING ON."

One of the court games at Lotoli was known as "Passing on." King Pip, who was fond of studying strange phases of human nature, held the theory that strong passions could be passed from man to man like an electric shock. In testing this theory he invented the aforesaid game.

He was sitting with his council in a complete circle, the highest members on his right, the lowest on his left, when he abruptly gave his fat Chief Councillor a ringing box on the ear. The Chief Councillor bit his lip and struck the giggling Second Councillor who was on his right. The Second Councillor looked daggers at the Chief Councillor, and avenged the insult he had received—upon the Third Councillor. The latter, flushed with wrath against his immediate superior, vented his wrath upon his immediate inferior.

As the blow was passed on to the right the indignation seemed to pass on with it. The Chief Councillor had actually begun to enjoy the grimaces of his juniors before the buffet had made a complete round of the circle. When the second lowest struck the lowest member of the board, and the latter, having royalty on his right and a superior on his left, could only dance with impotent rage, all the rest regained their spirits, and enjoyed the game thoroughly.

In fact so boisterous became their mirth that the unhappy junior, seeing himself a public laughing-stock, suddenly ceased his buck-jumps, and fled howling to the bosom of his family. There he doubtless found a vent for his pent-up feelings, in pounding his wives or "shaking his mother" in a way that "Scotty" would have deprecated.

The game had proved so very diverting to him that the enthusiastic king started another round of it then and there, by hitting the now hilarious Chief Councillor upon the open mouth. This initiative, which *Bell's Life* would call "shutting the potato trap," and the American small boy would call "mashing on the snoot," was pretty generally followed in the second round; which round was played with an ardour that rendered it intensely gratifying—to Pip and the dentists.

So pleased was the tyrant with the success of his experiment, that he afterwards started the game every now and then in his court. This he always did abruptly, generally when his parasites seemed enjoying themselves most. So that it became a hard task for his courtiers to display the needful appreciation of the royal jokes and at the same time to avoid the too broad smile that would probably suggest a rubber of "Passing on" to a monarch so fond of startling contrast.

"He likes 'Passing on,'" muttered the nimble Tehee to his two fellow-conspirators at the close of a spirited game; "perhaps he won't like 'Passing away' quite so much!"

This was the day before the revolt.

(To be continued.)

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