

## FURTHER DOINGS OF THE MAJOR.

By F. BLAKE CROFTON.

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

MISGUIDED BY EXPERIENCE

I once started for a certain inland village with a load of mirrors to barter for ostrich feathers. The idea seemed a promising one, for on my last trip a rich negro had given me a very high price for my pocket looking-glass, and I had always found Africans as vain of their style of beauty as we are of ours. Yet I was doomed to return featherless and mirrorless.

The very last day of our journey we encountered a simoom; to describe which properly would make my story too long. I swallowed enough sand to satisfy an ostrich, and pecks of dust got underneath the cover of the waggon and overlaid the mirrors. We had to halt at a river to polish our goods and wash ourselves before entering the Buctoo village to which we were journeying.

We nudged our mirrors along the bank and, wading into the stream, dashed water over them. While I was thus washing the large toilet glass which I designed for the Buctoo chief, one of my negroes—who was a very undemonstrative man—stopped working and gazed at me fixedly.

"What are you gaping at?" I cried.

He pointed calmly at my legs.

A large crocodile had swum noiselessly behind me, and was at that moment opening his snout with a view to amputating one of my nether limbs. I started to one side, but I was too late. The water retarded my flight, and leviathan is not such a slow or unwieldy creature as he appears to be. In a few seconds the brute's long jaws protruded before me, one on each side of my right leg! I saw them closing on the endangered limb. Then I saw them opening with a jerk, and to my amazement the beast rushed furiously at the largest mirror!

He had seen what he thought a strange crocodile catching a man on the bank of his own river. This bold poaching on his preserves could not be allowed for an instant! The defiant trespasser on his domains had to be chastised. Such encroachments on his riparian rights should be ripped in the bud, if he knew how—and he rather guessed he did. Though he had barely made his mark upon me, yet business had to be attended to before pleasure. Besides, he objected to violent exercise after meals. Hence my reprieve.

He crunched the mirror into small bits, and then smiled for a moment, fondly imagining that he had swallowed his vanished antagonist in the shortest time yet reported. But catching sight of the fancied intruder in another glass, he charged at it, more furious than before. He smashed all my glasses before he stopped, except one. This was a mirror that magnified and distorted objects. I brought it thinking some one of the Buctoos might have a taste for caricatures and give an extra price for it. In this glass the crocodile saw his own open jaws much larger than life, and his own hideousness increased twofold; and he sensibly concluded not to tackle any such reptile as that.

Flopping back into the water in disarray, he saw me standing on the bank at a safe distance. Then he sorrowed vainly over his lost opportunity. He had abandoned a substance for a shadow, and could not avoid musing desolately on what might have been!

I could scarcely believe at first that my leg was on my body, much less that it was only slightly scratched. Indeed, I had begun to hop away on my left foot, and did not attempt to use my right leg at all until the shallow water through which I was hopping tripped me up. However, the very moment I was out of danger I proved conclusively that the limb was quite sound and strong, by kicking the undemonstrative nigger who had stared at the crocodile coming to eat me, as quietly as he would have stared at a wild beast feeding in a cage.

As the negroes turned our lightened waggon homewards, I cocked my gun and looked revengefully towards the reptile that had destroyed my goods.

He was floating despondently down the stream, quite regardless of another crocodile which was swimming fiercely at him.

"No more fights with phantoms for me to-day!" thought the dazed and disheartened animal.

And while he was thus musing his enemy (who was a sad reality) secured a deadly grip upon him, and took him down to his quiet dining-room at the bottom of the river.

(To be Continued.)

A NEW SORT OF FIRE INSURANCE.—"Look here, Bridget," said a Ven Ness avenue matron to her cook the other day. "I really can't allow you to have company in the kitchen every night."

"It's all along of the terrible fire in Chicago, mum."

"What on earth has that to do with it?"

"Why, mum, ever since then I do be afraid of fire, so that I have one of the boys from the engine house round the corner come and sit with me evenings. It do make me feel more comfortable like, somehow."

ALL FOR A HEART.—"You don't really love him, my dear?"

"Well, perhaps not; but it's my first chance and I may never get another."

"Never mind if you don't. Wait until you find a man after your own heart."

"That's just what's the matter, mamma. Charlie has been after my heart for eighteen months and I guess I better let him have it."

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