

MR. SPOLDOODLE AND JULIUS CÆSAR.



MR. SPOLDOODLE aspired in a humble way to the *role* of a humorist, though his little seeds of witticism sometimes fell exceedingly flatly on the rocky, unappreciative minds of imperturbable acquaintances, who not only often declined during the relations of his tit bits to see where "the laugh came in," but on some occasions—though they were rare, be it said to the credit of the human race—had been known to look blankly at him, with pitiful expressions on their faces, at the very crisis of his jokes, making him sorry that he had not refrained from

the proverbial folly of casting his pearls before pigs, to use a simile that I fancy I quote somewhat incorrectly. Still, whatever were the shortcomings of stolid, hard-hearted outsiders, in the family-circle, at least, Spoldoodle never lacked applause. True, charming Mrs. S. was not so quick as he might have desired in comprehending the finer points of his more delicate or elaborate sallies, but the joke only required full explanation for roars of laughter to burst from the mouth of his lovely and loving better half.

Once upon a time our hero had startled Mr. Daubrhyme, a neighbour, by rushing into that gentleman's domicile with the astounding intelligence that the Dutch had taken Holland! His neighbour being rather deficient in his knowledge of the more recondite details of continental geography, rushed out into the street, intending to seize, without ceremony, the first vendor of evening papers who hove in sight. No news lad turned up for a minute or two, however, and he employed the interval in communicating to his friends across the road, and sundry other persons that passed, the warlike rumor. Successful as Mr. Spoldoodle was, this jest would have been dearly purchased had he not for several days after kept clear of the subsequently enlightened neighbor's precincts. Some considerable time, however, had elapsed, and the wrath of Mr. Daubrhyme having been allayed by an invitation to supper, Spoldoodle was at length freed from the ever-present dread of being horse-whipped, and once more gave a loose rein to his aerial, *bizarre* humor.

One evening whilst walking home from the scene of his daily labors, an idea occurred to the subject of our narrative. He had been for some days cudgeling his brains during leisure moments for materials wherewithal to furnish a brilliant mental pyrotechnic display on some suitable evening at home, when a hazy recollection of his having once read of some old lady or other of the present day who wept bitterly, and was otherwise greatly afflicted with grief, on being informed that Queen Anne was dead, passed over his mind. Ah! he had it now. He would be historical. Death had lately been busy in the ranks of greatness, and something on this subject would possibly tickle the imagination of his friendly fireside critics.

"What do you think I heard at the office this afternoon, just as I was coming home, my dear," said Mr. S., drawing his chair from the tea table towards the fire, after having duly refreshed the inner man, and turning to his spouse, who, with her eldest hope—a pushing young man of nineteen—had already taken up her place in a com-

fortable easy chair on the opposite side of the hearth. "You will scarcely believe me," he went on, reaching his head forward, and speaking slowly and deliberately; "Julius Cæsar is dead!"

Spoldoodle had flown too high this time for his dutiful helpmeet. Never having read of the great Roman who fell beneath the ruthless daggers of Brutus and his fellow conspirators, she contented herself with merely remarking: "Ah, indeed! You don't say so? I trust his wife and family are left amply provided for, William, dear."

But the effect of the announcement upon Spoldoodle, junior, was dynamic—excuse the word!

"Great heavens!" he cried, unheeding (in fact, not hearing) his mother's words, and bringing a pair of glaring orbs to bear upon his pater's placid countenance. "Gracious goodness! this really cannot be true! Never in the world!"

Mr. Spoldoodle, as is but too frequently the case with men of his superior calibre, had never entertained any very high opinion of his son's intellectual powers. Nevertheless, he was hardly prepared for this. However, his joke above all; he would carry it out.

"Yes," he answered, in a mingled tone, as clear of contempt and merriment as he could command; "Yes. Fact, Johnny, I tell ye! I had it from undeniable, unquestionable authority. But don't mention it outside, my boy. The afternoon newspapers haven't got hold of it yet! Ha, ha!"

Johnny started to his feet.

"Ah, father," he said, in a voice that a critical observer might have imagined quavered a little, "the news is nothing to me—nothing at all! But I must be going. I have an engagement with the minister, Mr. Graveyard. I promised to assist him in some matters connected with the mission to the Horong Outangs, you know. I shan't be long away; and, by the bye, I'll just take the dollar you promised the Rev. Mr. Collywod to give to the fund along with me, if you please;" and obtaining the money after a brief delay, he moved quietly into the street.

Spoldoodle did not see Johnny any more the same evening, but next morning after breakfast that youth took occasion as the old man was leaving home, to thank him for the information imparted on the preceding night. More puzzled than ever at the persistent stupidity of one of whom he had years ago—when Johnny wore pinnafores, or even yet more infantile articles of apparel—dreamed better things, Spoldoodle could only bring himself to mutter casually, "Oh, yes, yes! You were welcome. Say no more about it!"

But it turned out that this was advice Johnny certainly could not act upon, for, in the evening—the old man never came home at mid-day—that promising youth pushed into the quiet room where a homely meal was laid, stung his low-crowned fashionable felt fiercely into a corner on the floor, and to the amazement of his father and the terror of his mother, yelled vigorously:—

"What the deuce were you thinking about, governor, last night? Who was it that made so confounded an ass of you? Julius Cæsar's no more dead than you are. He was the freshest and finest animal entered for the Queen's

