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## Miscellaneous.

Robert Stimson, Esq.,

SHOWING HOW BOB CAUGHT A MERMAID.

BY JULIUS.

Bob was a Gothamite, the third son and the ninth child,—joint production of a staunch old 'Knickerbocker' and a West Indian Creole,—rather a singular union, but decidedly a prolific one. Stimson, senior, being in what paragraphists term 'easy circumstances,' remarkable fecundity of Mrs. S. was the not becoming as a misfortune.

Bob had six sisters, short and fat, good natured and loquacious. 'Language' was large throughout the family; fully up to a phrenological '7,' talking that figure as the maximum of the ratio of comparison. 'Mirth' and 'Tune,' especially, the latter, were also very generally and powerfully developed on the dark haired craniums of the junior Stimsons. They were all singers,—any of the neighbors would have given you that piece of information without the slightest hesitation,—a regular family choir; any little imperfections in whose performance were certainly not attributable to insinuation.—They were emphatically a musical family,—lineal descendants from the son of 'Calliope,' practically familiar with the use of every known musical instrument from a 'jews-harp' to a 'bassoon' or orchestral 'serpent,'—beginning, (as Bob said,) early, and 'taking to it' naturally. This was not very surprising, although the pertinacity and utter disregard of time and place evinced in the indulgence of the family propensity, certainly was remarkable,—so much so that there was ordinarily an immense amount of 'moving' going on in Stimson's vicinity every May-day. It was a chief misfortune of theirs and a standing subject for remark with them, that they were forever surrounded by musical people, creatures who had no taste for music, who had even gone so far as to monologue against what one brute had denominated as their 'infernal hullabaloo.'

They were familiarly known in the neighborhood as the 'noisy nine!' a similitude doubtless intended to be applied to the unfortunate daughters of 'Pieros,' (who failed in their contest with the Muses and were cruelly transformed into Magpies therefor,) rather than the legitimate 'Nine' of classical notoriety. This, however, they bore with exemplary equanimity. Truly, as Bob said, 't was of no use getting angry at a man who was so musically obtuse as to call a scientific execution of the 'Battle of Prague' on six different instruments, 'a thundering nuisance,' as did one neighbor, upon a certain occasion, who had hallooed himself hoarse from an opposite window in demanding an immediate cessation of what he was pleased to term the 'cursed uproar,' upon pain of a complaint to the 'mayor' on the following morning.

But our business is with Bob, not with his sisters or their accomplishments. In addition to the musical faculty of the inherent power of which he would state,—in illustration,—that, when but three years old he could, upon a common comb, covered with thin paper, produce sounds so closely resembling those of a violin and perform certain tunes with such power and accuracy as to induce an old blind gentleman in an opposite dwelling incontinently to throw out pennies from his chamber window in the belief that it was the performance of some street minstrel, with a view to alms. This, Bob would

tell 'upon honor,'—whether true or not,—there could be no doubt but that he believed it to be so then, having told it often enough to give to it the most implicit credence by the time he arrived at man's estate. In addition, as I before stated, to this harmonious weakness, Bob's distinguishing characteristic, his principal 'vanity,' was 'fishing.'—To him all other active amusements were as naught, or at any rate, subordinate to this. Bob was a fisherman! he had a genius for the thing, which developed itself in all his actions in that regard. He considered the somewhat precarious dominion we exercise over the 'monsters of the briny deep,' as the greatest and most important of the gifts of the Creator to his creature. He loved fishing! was of a piscivorous habit, and loved to eat 'em when caught; preferring 'fish' to either 'flesh or fowl.' He was predestined to an exceeding close affinity with the scaly tribe, being clerk in a fish store; was marked naturally with the figure of a fish under the left arm,—either a whale or a mackerel, Bob didn't know which,—had a 'fishy' look with him, a white looking eye, a sharply defined, attenuated, and exceedingly straight and pointed nose, closely resembling that of a pike,—in strange contrast with the usual organs of the Misses Stimson, all of which were decidedly and ambitiously 'snubblish,'—a pouting, oval shaped mouth, with little or no chin thereunto attached,—in fact, presented quite a 'shady' appearance. From very broad shoulders hung down two arms,—reaching but a trifle lower than the place where the legs ought to be,—which in walking were not swung to and fro after the manner of ordinary mortals, but dashed out laterally; in a spasmodical sort of fashion, very much like a man swimming. This, in addition to a slightly wriggling style of pedestrianism, forming a 'tout ensemble' decidedly piscatorial. As before stated, Bob was a fisherman. The twelfth Zodiacal sign was his natal constellation. He was born under 'Piscis Major' and had entirely abandoned himself to its influences. Bob religiously devoted all holidays to his favorite pursuit. He was deeply learned in the names, nature, habits and haunts of the entire finny tribe,—had all the marks and grounds known to old sportsmen for thirty miles round, and considered it glorious sport to start at daylight with two dollars worth of 'soft crab' and 'shrimp' for bait, row eight or nine miles against a strong tide, sit all day in the hot sun and row back at night with a bunch of fish which might justly be considered dear at a quarter of a dollar! This was what Bob considered real, substantial enjoyment,—none of your 'wishy-washy,' nobby-pamphletism' for him. He eschewed all dancing, theatricals, picnics, kissing parties and the like, as weak, mawkish, and beneath the dignity of man! considering his favorite pastime the only real source of unalloyed amusement of an out-door life, with music for domestic recreation; the two combined,—when possible,—the very acme of human enjoyment.

Bob had stored his mind with a collection of 'legends' in relation to the 'gentle art,' commencing with 'Jonah's Whale,' which he considered as being decidedly the most authentic of the miracles, though, as he himself remarked, it certainly was curious how the whale, having succeeded in getting upon 'dry land' for the purpose of vomiting up 'Jonah,' managed to get back to his native element, being legless and unwieldy; but Bob's organs of 'marvellousness' was small, by no means correspondent with his musical development, notwithstanding the active exercise of his Ideality, caused him to narrate continually 'Fish Stories,' which stretched to its utmost tension the largest organ of 'Wonder' in possession of his hearers. One of Bob's favorite stories was in relation to the taking, in a seine, of a huge sea bass of exactly the same length as himself, to an inch, upon that portion of the shores of Staten Island where now stands the whalom 'Watering Place,' New Brighton. In this adventure his life was periled repeatedly, being dragged by the scaly 'leviathan' several times beyond his depth, and though very fond of 'going in a swimming,' Bob could not swim.

This affair Bob regarded as the 'chief d'ouvre' of his life; its result, as decidedly more important than that of the Battle of Trenton, in which his paternal grandfather was said to have been a participant; the only piece of historical record with which he was to any degree

familiar. With this and divers other similar narratives of the capture of sundry 'drums' or 'sheephead' of unusual dimensions, would Bob beguile the casual companion of his sporting hours, as seated in his skiff he would arrange his tackle, of which article he had a large mahogany box full, which he had doubtless cost him from time to time, the price of at least a grand piano. And notwithstanding the doubtful looks of an occasional sceptic, Bob was blessed in the belief that his fish tales were generally regarded as being, in the main, strictly true.

Having thus presented your readers with a short preliminary account of Bob's peculiarities, I shall proceed to give them the details of that particular occasion, (as Bob was wont to term it,) on which he captured the 'Mermaid' alluded to in our heading.

'T was in the latter portion of the summer of '37, in the very height of the 'real Estate' bubble, when every rod of land, whether dry and arable, or, as in many instances, entirely covered with water, within fifty miles of New York, was made the subject of blind speculation; and single farms, ordinarily valued at \$5,000 or thereabouts, were sold to the speculative gentry at prices varying from 30 to \$40,000, and immediately converted into magnificent lithographic cities! (on the map,) with churches, theatres, squares and parks, with an occasional fountain or two, located almost invariably in spots innocent of water from time immemorial,—the whole expensively and elaborately surveyed and laid out in streets and avenues pompously designated in imitation of the parent city, as Broadway, Pearl street, Water street, Bond street, Wall street, &c. &c., and walled in by a long line of heavy solid stone wharves, sufficiently extensive for the ample accommodation of the whole United States' navy, giving (on paper,) to the whole a singularly imposing appearance, and frequently inducing the admiring beholder to forget the trifling drawback, that within these magnificent marine havens no vessel of more than a hundred tons could ever, by any possibility, find entrance, from the simple, overlooked fact, that the river channel was too shallow to admit a larger.—When at every other steamboat landing of the adjacent rivers and Kills as they are termed, a gaudy, shiny-looking gilt sign, proclaimed to the passenger that the little ten foot square building to which it was attached was a 'Land Office,' of the tenant of which, splendid and eligible lots might be purchased at prices varying in accordance with their proximity to the apocryphal squares, parks, and public buildings aforesaid, from one hundred to a thousand dollars; and assurances were given the puzzled inquirer, to whom it was clearly and certainly demonstrated that by such an investment of his surplus fund handsome profit must almost immediately accrue. A constant appeal to the 'map,' and eloquent descriptions of the intensity of the public anxiety to obtain severally for themselves a chance in this 'the most promising opportunity for investment occurring in modern times,' too often successfully excited the cupidity of the mawry and caused them to affix to certain documents their signatures, eventually depriving themselves of the use and benefit of hundreds and thousands of hard-earned dollars.

'T was during this exciting period that Bob, availing himself of his customary summer holiday, wearied with the dust and din of city life and somewhat tired of the daily routine of salt fish transactions, freighting his skiff with the necessary equipment and implements for the exercise of his destructiveness, wended his way to that peaceful portion of the shores of New Jersey which is washed by the waters of the 'Kill Van Kull,' immediately opposite to the northern shore of Staten (or as he facetiously termed it, Satan's) Island. This was a favorite spot with Bob, as in addition to its being in the vicinity of certain celebrated 'drum' grounds, it possessed the additional charm of being the home of several rosy-checked Dutch girls in whose good graces Bob had, during the previous season, made considerable advance. Here, then, Bob pitched his tent, having issued, to one, whom he shall cognominate 'Ned,' an invitation to spend in his amphibious society, a whole fortnight, and to whom he had presumptuously promised any amount of fun during that happy interval. Passing over the sayings and doings which then and there generally transpired, proceed we to narrate how Bob, a few

evenings prior to his return to city duty, caught that 'Mermaid.'

The two sportsmen having concluded a rather poor day's fishing, determined, on returning, to diverge from their direct course for the purpose of rounding a point in Newark Bay, somewhat famous for an excellent bathing beach, there to luxuriate, by the light of the moon,—which was in its last quarter, and nearly down to the horizon—in a glorious swim, as Bob proposed, 'malgre' his ignorance of that useful accomplishment. Accordingly, the bath was indulged in, until the waning Queen of Night was upon the point of leaving her throne, when the coming darkness admonished the couple of the necessity of return. They accordingly regained the skiff, and having dressed, lifted the 'kedg'e' and pulled for home, Ned being oarsman and Bob in charge of the tiller. They pulled away in silence for some time, with a care'ul stroke, giving the reef a wide berth, it being now quite dark, and hugging the shore as close as possible to keep out of the swiftly running tide which was ahead. The night dark,—very dark—it was impossible to distinguish objects two yards distant, and the voyagers, though satisfied that they had rowed long enough to be close home, were in doubt as to their precise locality. At Bob's suggestion, Ned ceased pulling, and rested on his 'skulls,' with a view to an 'observation.' After looking vainly some time, he was about to resume his labor when—

'Whi-sh-t-sh-sh!' says Bob, 'hold on Ned, what the deuce is that?'

'What!'

'Sh-sh, hark,—here, on your left.'

'Where? I don't see anything.'

'Hush-sh-sh,—keep dark,—back water!'

'Back it is,' says Ned.

'Hark, again!—and now Ned's ear was regaled with sound like that of some one suppressing or suffocating an inclination to laugh, and peering into the darkness he discovered what he at first supposed to be a large stake. Closer scrutiny invested it with something of a human appearance.

'What t-h-e-d-e-v-i-l i s i t?' gasped out Ned, now as much excited as his mercurial companion. Again they fancied they heard the tittering sound.

'By thunder!' exclaimed Bob,—whose very thoughts were of a piscivorous character,—'it's a Mermaid!'

Still, whatever it was, it remained motionless. The boat had drifted from the object of wonder some five or six yards, when Bob,—whose hand seized upon the body of a clam, intended for bait, which lay on the skiff's bottom,—standing up in the skiff, vowed he'd know, and before his partner could prevent, hurled with all force the said clam at the said 'Mermaid.' The precision of his aim was evinced by a 'splishy' sort of sound, as of two fleshy substances in collision; whereupon a faint shriek went up from the 'critter,' and at the same moment Ned was made sensible of some invisible misfortune to Bob, who was by some unseen agency, violently pulled over backwards into the water.

'Ned! Ned! pull—pull—for—s-l-a-s-h—God's—gur-g-gle—g-gle—gur-g-gle—spl-a-sh-oh!—Mar-d-er, Ned! spl-a-sh—souse, gur-g-g-gle, s-p-i-sh-sh, s-p-a-sh, mur-d-er, d-ann-t'n' shrieked Bob,—who had never used such an exclamation in his life, before.—'Who—are ye? what—oh—oh—spl-i-sh souse—gur-g-gle—gur-g-gle—the Devil! Ned, oh! N-c-d' shouted he with all his strength, as a momentary respite was afforded him, as he came up at intervals from under the water, beneath the surface of which some three or four of the most Amazonian of the Mermaids were laughingly engaged in thrusting him. Where was Ned, in the skiff? not by a jug full, the skiff was bottom upwards. Ned was in deep water where the water nymphs didn't like to venture.

At the first alarm! Ned had tried his oars, but the skiff was fast: he'd pull with might and main but some invisible power held him, and at every pull the skiff would rebound towards shore. And now Ned could distinguish some four or five human looking creatures of gigantic size (as they appeared to him) holding on to the stern of the boat, he was in the hands of the Philistines! his position was defied! and he knew it; he'd seen the 'elephant'—had Ned! he'd been there before.

'T was but a moment's work to spring over the bows as far as possible and strike out for deep water. He knew the nature of the brute, they didn't like mischief in deep water, and he

gained it, then turned to listen. By this time Bob's shrieks were terrific; something must be done, they'd drown him. And now again he shouts.

'He-l-p Ned—N-c-d—for God's sake!'

The thing was getting serious, and with a resolve to 'do or die,' Ned swam back till he discovered one of the enemy close to him. Noiselessly he dips and reaching bottom, seizes a foot, fin, tail, or—something, and down comes a Mermaid, with a piercing shriek, which was immediately echoed from a dozen throats, and then such a splashing and scrambling, such a 'digging' for shore you never saw. One after another, Bob's persecutors amongst the rest—whist he, poor wretch, sat upon the beach, exhausted, up to his neck in the water. The unfortunate animal that Ned had seized was left behind, Bob could not imagine,—unless it had been wounded in the encounter.

Ned had gone for the skiff, when the lost one passed Bob without noticing him. A feeling of vengeance sprung up in Bob's breast, and being sufficiently restored,—having vomited about six quarts,—as he stated, of salt water, he rose suddenly, and gave chase. The critter 'locomoted' rapidly. Bob was too swift for her, he overhauled her, and we presume had a battle, or an explanation, if they talk,—or something of the kind, for he did not return. Meantime Ned having righted the skiff and anchored her, walked up the beach to find Bob, or home, or both, or either. In so doing, stumbled over a frock and hem—hem! no not exactly that; didn't know what! It looked something like a shirt, only that it was sleeveless and longer. At any rate, Ned took it home and made a very minute examination thereof, but to no purpose, for though he enquired diligently, there was no one in that neighborhood who owned it. He was therefore forced into the conclusion that hereafter in the natural history of the Mermaid it should always be mentioned that the creature evinces a certain degree of womanly delicacy, and unless in very hot nights, clothes itself after the manner of females 'terrene.'

That this is true of the genus, universally, he perhaps would hesitate to aver, but of the species to be found in the waters of New Jersey he is qualified to speak positively,—as he yet retains the evidence thereof in the garments aforesaid,—which differ in no appreciable degree from those worn by nymphs who are not terraqueous.

Some two years after this occurrence he was placed in a position to speak with more certainty as to the close resemblance borne by this animal to the human race, by the receipt of an invitation to attend the wedding of his fishy friend, Robert Stimson, Esq., who, after the ceremony, took Ned aside and whispered him, in strict confidence, so don't you mention it, dear reader to a 'living soul,'—that that the lady was the identical Mermaid that he (Bob) had chased and captured on that memorable occasion.

Ned assured me on his 'honor,' that she was in no wise distinguishable from a very pretty, healthy looking woman! —Times.

## ORIGIN AND ANTIQUITY OF HORSE-RACING.

Having shown in our paper of last week upon this subject that horse-racing, originally derived from the East, was a portion of the ceremonies used in celebrating the festivities of Mithras, or the sun, and that this worship finding its way into Greece and Rome, it was subsequently transplanted by the Romans into England,—that the English have adopted many of the manners and customs of the Romans is very evident to any observing reader of the social history of that people—let us now inquire how closely we have followed them in respect of horse-racing.

We have already said that the races of Rome were run in the open country till Tarquinius Priscus built the grand circus in which the races were afterwards performed. How far the horses ran before they got to the last meta from the starting place is not expressed by historians, but we are informed that the above circus is said to be about two thousand one hundred and sixty-seven Roman feet in length, and nine hundred and sixty broad, of a semi-circular form at one end, the other extending in a right line, but rather circular; and that the races commonly ended at the seventh turn round the metae, though now and then we meet with, upon extraordinary occasions, fewer heats. The number and length of the heats also va-

ry here. The usual number of missus, or matches, were generally about twenty-four, though sometimes a far greater number were exhibited, for Suetonius tells us that the Emperor Domitian presented a hundred matches in one day.

The time when the races were to begin was anciently given by sound of trumpet. Both the custom of matches and that of summoning the horses to a starting place by a signal are still practised in England. The horses being up at the time, ready for starting, the signal was given by a mappa, or napkin, hung out at the Prætor's tent, or the chief magistrate's seat; hence Juvenal calls them Megalensis games—Megalæ Spectacula Mappæ. The origin of this custom was that when Nero was once at dinner, and the people making a great noise desiring that the sport might begin, the Emperor threw the napkin he had in his hand out of the window as a token that he had granted their request.

At these races, also, the Romans rode in different colors, particularly the companies of charioteers, to distinguish themselves. These were generally four, viz: Prasina (green), rursata (red), alba or albata (white) and the vineta (sky or sea color); but the green was generally the favorite, especially under Caligula, Nero; and the following Emperor A. D. 81, and died A. D. 96, added two more colors, viz: the golden or yellow, and the purple (aurea et purpurea) but these were soon laid aside again by the following Emperors. The victors in the sports were honored with garlands, coronets, and other ornaments after the Greek manner, and very often with considerable rewards. Hence Juvenal says:

*Hinc centum, patrimonium causidicorum Parte alia soluta tumentis posse lacertis.*

The people of Rome were so partial to the races at the festivities of Mithras, and also afterwards in compliment to the Emperors who encouraged these sports, that there was an Ippodroma on purpose for these races in most cities in the empire, to which the people thronged in vast numbers. To show how much the populace were interested in these games. Juvenal sums up their wants in two words, Panem et circenses (bread and the games)—that is to say the bread distributed by the Emperors and the games in the circus. The same poet also describes, in his seventh satire, the extraordinary fondness of the Romans for these races. Congreve has thus translated the passage:

*'This day all Rome (if I may be allowed, Without offence to such a numerous crowd, To say all Rome) will in the circus sweat, Echoes already to their shouts repeat. Methinks I hear the cry, away, away! The green has won the honor of the day O! should these sports be but one day forborne Rome would, in tears, her loved diversion mourn.'*

Such was the fondness too, for favorite horses, that Montfaucon tells us, and gives an engraving of a drawing from an ura which has two inscriptions upon it, the uppermost regards the horses, the lower the person interred therein. Over the first horse was an inscription, the meaning of which is—'that this was in memory of the horse Aquilo, begat by Aquillo, who had conquered 127 times, won the second prizes 88 times and the third prizes 37 times.' The inscription over the second horse is thus rendered into English. 'That Hippinus, the grandson of Aquilo, conquered 140 times, won the second prizes 67 times, and the third 35 times.' Hence we see they kept a regular pedigree of their horses as at the present time. It is also observable, that the inscriptions for the horses are placed above that of his owner or rider, it being usual to pay more honour to their race horses than to the men who rode or drove them; for they erected monuments to perpetuate their memory, as may be seen in Ælian, Pliny, and others; and in Spartan we find that Hadrian was so fond of his horses and dogs that he built sepulchres for them, and there is yet remaining an epitaph which Salmasius has given, which begins thus—'Berysthenes, called Alanus, from the country he was of, the Emperor's race-horse, &c. The epitaph under the horse was made by order of Claudia Helice for her husband Lucius Avitus Dionisius. There are abundance of proofs of these races from Roman coins; upon many of Aurelian's coins we find, Soil Miret' and 'Oriens Avg,' inscriptions often adopted by alter Emperors and generally for the same reasons as Aurelian on celebrating the races to Mithras.

Although it does not appear when horse-race began, it is evident they were used 655 years before the birth of