

## XXXVIII.

## PRACTICAL JOKES.

GREEK SLAVE. — SECTARIAN DOG. — A NOCTURNAL MISTAKE. — HOW TO COLLECT A CROWD. — SERMON TO OLD VETERANS. — HUMOR IN THE PULPIT. — WOOL BY THE FOOT. — GHOST IN ASTOR LIBRARY. — A BAPTIST MINISTER IN A QUANDARY. — A BAD SPECULATION. — RIVAL CLAIMS TO AUTHORSHIP. — A DIVINE ON HIS MUSCLE. — BARNUM AND THE RECTOR — FUN AND PIETY.

## GREEK SLAVE.

To pay off the debt of a church up town, a fair was proposed, at which tableaux were to be introduced. The fair was in the hands of some ladies and gentlemen of the first respectability and standing. The printed programme announced "The Greek Slave" as the closing tableau. How that could be exhibited with propriety to a mixed audience was a marvel. "Say a house has the plague, and all London will go to see it," is the English proverb. Say that something supposed to be indelicate is to be put on exhibition, and the sensitive will go in crowds to express their indignation. The intention of the committee in putting the Greek Slave on the programme was to draw a crowd, and make the thing a success, as of course it was. At length the tableau of the Greek Slave was reached. Many a heart palpitated and cheek crimsoned as the curtain was rung up. The sight called out bursts of laughter

and rounds of applause. On the centre of the stage stood an Irishman [Irish laborers are called "Greeks" in this region, and their settlements are called Greek settlements]. He was clothed in rags, a torn hat on his head, and dilapidated brogans on his feet. He had a hod of bricks upon his shoulder, and, wiping the sweat from his brow, he gave the audience a knowing nod. The fair getters-up of the tableau were rewarded with rounds of applause. The Greek Slave lifted the debt.

## SECTARIAN DOG.

A gentleman owns a dog that has some remarkable instincts. On week days he has all the passions and propensities of other dogs, but on Sundays his peculiarities and sectarian sentiments come out. Unlike the crow, he can count. He knows when Sunday comes. He is not the same dog as on other days. He indulges in no pastimes, encourages no company, and says, in actions louder than words, "Six days shalt thou play and do all thy sport." The family are Presbyterians; the dog is a Methodist. On Sunday mornings he attends the family to the Presbyterian house of worship, and then holds on his solitary and unbroken way until he comes to his own church, which is a little farther on. He has a particular place, up stairs, where he sits. No belle, or madam of fashion, who sweeps up the aisle of a popular church and finds a plebeian in her pew, can give a more decided expression of displeasure than does this dog if he finds any one in his seat. He attends divine service, and pays dogmatical attention to the word of doctrine. An example to many professed Christians, he may be seen on his way to church in

foul weather as in fair — not a half-day hearer either; while his denominational preferences are as well known as are those of any gentleman in the city.

#### A NOCTURNAL MISTAKE.

Two gentlemen do business in New York. They live side by side up town. The houses are so much alike that a stranger would easily mistake one for the other. With a security peculiar to New York, the night key that unlocks one door answers for the whole block. As everybody knows, the city is always under repair. Before the house of one of these gentlemen a drain was opened. He knew his house of a dark night, because he stumbled over the pile of dirt and rubbish in front of his door. One day both of these gentlemen happened to go away quite early, and remained away quite late. During their absence the drain before one door was closed and opened before the other. A little mystified by the lateness of the hour, one of the parties, taking the drain as his beacon, unlocked his neighbor's door, put out the gas in the hall, stumbled on the stairs, and undertook to go to bed. The other coming home about the same time, avoided the house near which the drain opened, went into his friend's house, lit up the gas in the parlor, rung the bell, and called for something to eat. The families were quietly in bed. The influx of strangers, and the loud noise they made, roused the whole house. Heads out of the window, with night-caps on, shouted "Police!" The city guardians made their appearance, and straightened matters. An attempt was made to hush up the affair, but it was too good a joke not to get wind.

#### HOW TO COLLECT A CROWD.

Pope's Venus was on exhibition in the city. It was Venus, and nothing more. It was not popular, and the gallery was losing money. One morning a furious attack was made, in one of the leading papers, on the exhibition. The attack was a very savage one. Pope's Venus was especially denounced as indelicate and immoral, and the virtuous and religious in New York were called upon to frown on such an exhibition. New York was indignant. Crowds flocked to the galleries. But everybody asked, "What is all this fuss about? This is the old statue of Venus." A quiet old man, who was walking round the room, looking like a decayed professor, could have answered the question if he would.

#### SERMON TO OLD VETERANS.

We have, in New York, a remnant of the soldiers of 1812. They furnished their own clothing and arms when the country called them to its defence. The government has never paid them for their clothes. They are poor, decrepit, and old. They can scarcely give a fellow-member a decent burial. They went at one time from church to church, as they were invited, to attend public worship. They assembled, about fifty in number one Sunday, and marched in good order to the church. Seats were reserved for them, and they took their place in the pews. Understanding the fitness of things, the pastor, who had invited the veterans to worship with him, selected a theme appropriate to the occasion. It was, the benefits of Sunday school instruction. The celebrated Dr. Robbins, of Massa-

chusetts, was invited to deliver an address to the graduating class of young ladies of the Norton Seminary. His address was on the origin, history, and social effects of duelling.

#### HUMOR IN THE PULPIT.

A very eccentric pastor who dwells among us is quite sensational in his way of doing things. His sermons are often from odd and out-of-the-way texts, announced in a manner often to produce a marked sensation. One day he came into his church, dressed in a white coat, white pants, and white vest, a low Byron collar, around which was fastened a red neck-tie. On arising to announce his text, he stood for a few moments perfectly still. His coat was thrown open, his thumbs thrust into the arm-holes of his vest, and in a loud, shrill voice, he said, "Let her drive!" This he repeated, and then, in a low tone, told his audience where the suggestive text could be found.

On another occasion, in speaking of prayer, he drew a humorous description of the various kinds in vogue at the present day. His powers of mimicry are very keen, and, to the great merriment of his audience, he ridiculed the different methods of addressing the Throne of Grace. He told a story of a man who wanted to pray, and did not know how. He went to a minister, and got him to write a prayer for him. He pasted this prayer on his foot-board, and when retiring to rest it was his custom to point to that prayer, and say, "Lord, them's my sentiments," as he jumped into bed. In the same sermon he told the story of a little girl who was piously inclined, yet was very fond of pickles. She took

one with her to her room as she retired. She laid it down on the chair while she knelt in devotion. Her little sister came into the room, helped herself to the pickle, and commenced craunching it. Pausing in her prayer, the little devotee said, "Please excuse me a minute, Lord, my sister is eating up my pickle." She arose from her knees, rescued her pickle, and then finished her prayer.

It is the custom of this preacher when a collection is taken up, to step to the front of the pulpit, take out his wallet, deliberately put a bill on the plate, and do so with an air that seems to say, "I would like to see any one in this house do less than that!"

#### WOOL BY THE FOOT.

A celebrated wool merchant of this city keeps a large stock on hand. It is in lofts, and so piled as to present a front to the buyer on all sides. A famous dealer went in one day to examine this stock. The manner in which it was piled suggested to him that it might not be as perfect all the way through as it was on the edges. "What do you ask for your stock?" said the dealer. A price was named, so much for the lot. "I will give you that price," said the trader, "for two feet deep all around." The owner did not see the joke as the laugh ran around on 'change, but he was excessively annoyed when parties asked him, "How much is wool a foot?"

## GHOST IN ASTOR LIBRARY.

The belief in spirits and ghosts seems to be bred in our bone. Fortune-tellers, under different names, flourish in New York, and find patrons among the wealthy and so-called intelligent. Some merchants among us buy, sell, and make investments as they are instructed by mediums, in whom they trust, and to whom they pay their money. Judging from the ill success of some of these ventures, it would be fair to presume that the judgment of spirits is not much safer in the matter of trade than that of men who remain in this world. A large portion of the letters dropped into the post office without any direction are letters addressed to fortune-tellers, on business, love, matrimony, and divorce.

Some time since the rumor became general that the Astor Library was haunted, and that a veritable ghost walked through the alcoves and galleries of that silent mausoleum of dead authors. It was announced that the dead Dr. Post had appeared to the living librarian. Much excitement was produced. Throngs of people, mostly ladies, visited the rooms daily. In groups they moved quietly round, their tread soft, their voices trembling and subdued, peering from alcove to alcove, as if they expected, but dreaded, that the local ghost would start out and greet them. The aged librarian was silent on the matter, neither denying nor affirming that he had seen a ghost. His friends say that he firmly believed, to the day of his death, that he had a visit from one who had been long in the spirit land. We boast in the nineteenth century of our freedom

from superstition. But New York women and men believe as firmly in ghosts as they did in Massachusetts in the time of the Salem witchcraft.

## A BAPTIST MINISTER IN A QUANDARY.

A large congregation filled an up-town Baptist Church not long ago. It was observed that three or four pews near the door were filled with women of the lower class. There was an effort at cleanliness and neatness about the company. They seemed to be acquainted with each other, and every female had a young babe in her arms. On the arrival of the minister, he was told that these women were present to have their children baptized. Now the Baptists believe that infant baptism and the popish mass originated about the same time, in the same locality, and the request put the preacher in a quandary. He sent a kind word to the mothers, however, and informed them that he was not in the habit of baptizing children; but if he was, he knew of none whom he would sooner baptize than those in his audience.

## BAD SPECULATION.

A young clergyman of this city, desirous of doing good, and having some money, was advised to buy the Sun newspaper, and turn it into a religious sheet. It circulated largely among the working classes; and while that fact would have deterred any one of common sense from attempting to convert it into a high-toned evangelical organ, yet the advisers of the gentleman induced him to make a venture. Of course the paper ran down rapidly, and the old proprietor had to step in

to save it from utter annihilation. The clergyman went out of the concern, it is hoped, thirty-five thousand dollars wiser, as he certainly was thirty-five thousand dollars poorer.

#### RIVAL CLAIMS TO AUTHORSHIP.

The poem "Nothing to Wear" was published by the Harpers, and for a time had a great run. Its reputed author was a Mr. Butler, a lawyer of this city; a man of small stature, fair talents, and a speaker on platforms at religious meetings. After the poem was published, the daughter of an Episcopal clergyman of Connecticut laid claim to the poem, stating that the idea and versification, the title and the name, — Miss Flora McFlimsey, — were her own. To verify her claim she printed four lines, which she avers Mr. Butler omitted in his version of "Nothing to Wear." The young lady says that she lost the poem from her satchel while riding in the cars. She enjoys the confidence and respect of a large circle of friends, who aver that she has written poetry quite equal to that referred to. It is quite certain that Mr. Butler has produced nothing so far that compares with "Nothing to Wear."

#### A DIVINE ON HIS MUSCLE.

A Doctor of Divinity lives in the upper part of the city. He is fond of out-door exercise, and usually walks to his home. If he attends a meeting late at night in the lower part of the city, he generally goes home on foot. At a time when garroters were plenty, he was attacked by a couple of ruffians late one night. Understanding something of the manly art, he disabled one of the

villains, and dragged the other to the station-house. He returned and secured the companion, and saw them safely locked up for the night. He appeared before the magistrate the next morning, and they were convicted and sent to the penitentiary. The doctor continues his lonely walks through the city late at night. It is said the gentlemen of the pave, who admire his pluck, give him a wide berth.

#### BARNUM AND THE RECTOR.

When Tom Thumb was married, Barnum kept out of sight. It was not known that he had anything to do with the business. It was first intended to have the wedding in the Academy of Music on the ticket system, but the general would not submit to making a show of himself on that occasion, so that idea was abandoned. The bishop of New York was to have performed the ceremony. Grace Church was the fashionable altar at which high New York exchanged its vows. It required some finesse and great skill to obtain that fashionable church for the marriage of the Lilliputians. Barnum undertook to manage that himself. He was not known to the rector, so he went boldly into his presence and asked for the church. He said the wedding was to be of the most select character, tickets were to be given to the aristocracy, and the guests were to come in full dress. The rector reluctantly consented. He appended to the consent certain conditions, which were put in writing, and if any one of the conditions were violated, the rector had a right to revoke his consent. Two conditions were expressly insisted upon. The first was that the church should

not be mentioned in connection with the affair until the morning of the wedding, though all New York knew it ten days before. "And now," said the rector, "don't you let that Barnum have anything to do with this matter. Don't let him know that I have given my consent to have Grace Church used. I wouldn't have Grace Church and Barnum bound up together for a thousand dollars." Barnum consented to all the conditions, and signed them on behalf of the agent, in whose name the affair was conducted. Great was the chagrin of the rector to learn that he had not only been outwitted by Barnum, but had entertained, beneath his own roof, the great showman himself!

#### FUN AND PIETY.

Genuine fun at times gets into the Fulton Street Prayer Meeting. Petitions from all sorts of persons are read, for all sorts of things. One was "for a young woman who had lost her first love." A person frequently took part who was in the habit of adding "er" after some words, such as, "O Lord-er," "Hear our pray-er," "Come and bless us-er." He believed in falling from grace, and he had an eye to the young woman who had lost her first love. He arose to pray, and did so in this manner: "O Lord-er, hear the pray-er of this young woman-er, who has lost her first *lov-er*." In each repetition of the word he called it "lov-er," and so emphasized the word "*first*," that the case seemed particularly hard, from the fact that had it been the second lover she had lost, the affliction would not have seemed so great. The ardent prayer went

forth that the lost lov-er might be restored. Grave faces relaxed and countenances, unused to smile in the house of the Lord could not resist the temptation. The idea of a stray lover being the theme of prayer was so comical, that no one could keep his face straight.