

*The Wasp*  
March 13, 1886

*Prattle*

The dog-worshippers are carrying their piety into literature: in the current number of *Harper's Magazine* one of them, named Hugh Dalziel expounds his horrible religion through a dozen pages, with pictures representing a whole Olympus of his hideous gods. He is frank with his flame—he loves dogs and doesn't care who knows it. The baseness of his taste is as refreshing to his soul as mud to a midsummer pig: he lies down and wallows in it. Before the shrine of his devotion this high priest of caniolatry performs postulations and genuflexions of so ignoble servility that a bunion-rumped baboon would blush blue to be seen executing them before the Ruler of the Universe. He begins the rites with an exposition of the "mutual liking" between Man and Dog, "which rests on the solid foundation of mutual interest," and shows how, through personal companionship, it "grows into something higher—into sentiments of esteem, involving on both sides sacrifices which strengthen the bond of union." As a reporter would say: The feeling ripened into a warmer attachment, which was consummated at the hymeneal altar, eventuating in the holy bonds of wedlock.

Mr. Dalziel's cynophile propensity inheres in his nature; it is not born of any such selfish consideration as "mutual interest" or even mutual esteem: he says we are "indebted" to the beast, not only for the good he does, but "even as the mere object upon which to lavish an exuberance of affection." Why, here's a person with more love than he knows what to do with; more than the New Testament enjoins; more than is good for his spiritual health. He is heaving and groaning with it: it rises in his throat till he can taste it, and sputters and sizzles in his pores like steam escaping from an ill-riveted boiler with a fat man on the safety-valve. If the suffering wretch must soil something with the slimes and oozes of his dropsical heart why does he not experiment cautiously with his wife and children? If he has none, why not cultivate a taste for the wife and children of his neighbour? Nay, what is the matter with God?

This person's awful condition is neither here nor there—thank Heaven, it is at least not here—but in order fitly to set forth by warning example the extravagance and depravity begotten of the dog-habit I must crave leave to quote him further:

*"If I could persuade those who have a nervous dread of dogs to get a puppy and bring it up and educate it to good habits and proper behavior they would lose all fear of dogs in general, and find in their pet and scholar a rich return for the investment of the affection and sympathy with animal life as a part of nature, which grows with exercise, and is its own reward."*

Bones of Caesar! a puppy—not a child, but an inchoate dog—a clammy-nosed, swell-fronted, Dutch-built, double-charged, flea-peopled, immodest epitome of all nastiness—whelp of a thousand infragrant sires, and itself smelling aloud! Reader, if you think, with the Dalziel person, that the care and companionship of an unripe dog would soften and humanize your nature and bring a holy peace into your soul, why—well, I think it would, too. But when the beast grows up don't forget which is the dog.

I have reserved the best of Mr. Dalziel's pious remarks to the last. He says he is earnestly desirous to inculcate by repetition and emphasis this lesson:

*"The man who makes a dog his own undertakes duties and responsibilities which he cannot discharge himself from except by performance, and that can only be done by intelligent study of the animal's nature and requirements, and the adjustment of his [the man's] conduct to these."*

This theory of man's duty to Dog—this conception of Dog as the controlling factor in human conduct—seems at first thought pretty radical, but I don't know. It goes far, certainly, but most of the people with whose dogs I have the honor to be acquainted are, I think, prepared to follow. If any man see madness in the proposition that he ought to live up to his dog and square his life to that creature's nature and requirements, it is to be feared that he has associated with only the lowest and basest curs.

Thus spake the cautious Mr. Brooks:

    "Go count the cash with speed:  
I do not half admire the looks  
    Of some of you, indeed."

They fingered o'er the whole amount:  
    Ten thousand dollars strayed!  
"High time, indeed," they said, "to count,  
    When roots are being played."

The Treasurer he smiles no more  
    But sighs the whole day through:  
"I wish I'd had it done before—  
    Upon my soul I do!"

O Mr. Brooks, dry up your eye,  
    And your contrition smother:  
And learn that counting comes as high  
    At one time as another.

"There is something very terrible occurring in Parlor A," said a pale and trembling guest at the Palace Hotel the other evening. What could poor Count Smith do? He cannot tell a lie. But neither can he lose a guest. The Republican County Committee was holding a meeting in that room. The Count bowed his head a moment and turned on his intellect, full force. "I never heard anything like it," added the guest; "is there a surgeon?" "My dear sir," said the Count, gravely but with a reassuring smile which illuminated his rugged front like the red glare of Hades on the adamant wall of Satan's citadel, "do not let it disturb you: it is nothing. That room was engaged yesterday as the hospital of the public pound. There is nothing in it but a few mad dogs."

The Count is very skillful in placating the demon of apprehension. Some weeks ago two Eastern men were playing billiards, when a row sprung up in the room and pistols were discharged. The Eastern gentlemen ran into the office, crying murder. The Count instantly left for the scene of action, and returning a few seconds later, nodded to one of the gentlemen and said: "You can resume your game, sir: all quiet now." "Why, bless my soul!" stammered the other, "I—I could have sworn I saw a man fall! Must have been a dozen men shooting!" "O

no, not a dozen, I assure you," Smith explained with great suavity; "there were only two actually firing, and it's all right, now—it's all right: they are both dead."

We sometimes have to wait a long time in this world for events to work out our vindication, but justification comes at last to all the good, for the wicked give themselves away. For many months Mr. Harry McDowell's paper has been bitterly attacking the personal character of Mr. Frank Pixley, and the whole world, from Long Bridge to Black Point, has ascribed the persecution to professional jealousy. Mr. McDowell endured this unfair judgment with dignity, and awaited its reversal with patience. Time and he were more than a match for slander's tooth, and at last that apparently estimable man, Mr. Pixley, has himself exposed the trouble by bringing an action on a promissory note, and it transpires that Mr. McDowell has all the time owed him money. Professional jealousy had nothing to do with it.

Mr. Charles Crocker (says the telegraph) has purchased a handsome residence in New York. He deserves the very handsomest residence in America for the patience and truly Christian fortitude with which he has so long endured the most hideous. There are uglier buildings in America than the Crocker house on Nob Hill, but they were built with public money for a public purpose; among the architectural triumphs of private fortune and personal taste it is peerless. If Mr. Crocker doesn't want it any more I'd like to burn it down.

The newspapers and politicians are making high holiday over Mr. Cleveland's phrase "innocuous desuetude." For my part, I think it singularly felicitous. But then I happen to know what it means. That, of course, makes a difference.

A few years ago a "chorus of indolent reviewers" was performing abderian ululations over Mr. Tilden's word "usufruct"—a good word, and common enough if the merry-makers had only known where to look for it. I once frightened a board of directors half to death by using the word "lure." I wish I had used it twice.

An editorial in a local daily newspaper congratulates the New York car-drivers on their peaceful but successful insurrection and says: "The striking feature of the incident was the absence of violence." A few days before it had a long special dispatch relating the "incident" as it occurred—a swarming mob smashing car-windows with stones, capturing wagons and piling them on the metals, overturning the cars of intersecting lines and flattening policemen with all manner of missileage, fired to kill. Wherefore I conclude that it is the duty of him who gathers news to make purchasers for the paper, and of him who expounds it to keep them. The man whose duty it is to tell the truth is usually given some light employment about the mailing-room.

There is a man in San Francisco—a millionaire—who has revived a very ancient custom, I am told. This gentleman is rather fond of dining people at his house—mostly men. Between the courses, now and then during the meal, he introduces various uncouth monsters, whose antics are supposed to amuse and edify the guests. I am told they don't. A friend of mine has asked me to complain of the infliction—which I willingly do, although it is not the simplest method of relief that my friend could have thought out. If he does not relish monsters with his dinner why does he not dine at home and ask to have the monsters sent over to him afterward, as a separate entertainment?

I have called this thesaurian's interprandial menagerie a very ancient custom. Consulting my authorities I find it is not as ancient as I thought. The instance I had in mind

was a dinner given in 1454 by Philip the Good, father of Charles the Bold, of Burgundy. During the repast a great number of grotesque and even frightful figures swarmed about the tables. These exhibitions were call entremets—a word used later to designate ornamental dishes not intended for the tooth, and now to signify certain side dishes. It would rather startle a modern diner-out to find in the menu, under the head of “Entremets,” such items as: “The Fire-breathing Boar,” “The Blazing Demon,” “The Winged Skeleton,” “Procession of the Dancing Dead,” “Head of Medusa, with Real Snakes,” etc. By the way, I forgot to explain that the objectionable rout of uncouth monsters introduced at the dinners of my friend’s friend are that gentleman’s children.

(Source: Archive.org, <https://archive.org/stream/waspjanjune188616unse#page/n194/mode/1up>)