

The Wasp
January 9, 1886

Prattle

Dame *Bulletin* is a lamp to the feet of finance, but in matters of philology she shines with the clouded radiance of a ham in a smoke-house—witness her insistence on the word “auro-metalist” to designate those who favor the single gold standard in the currency. It is a sorry mischance that so old a woman should have been brought to bed of such a dastard word as that, and makes one almost wish she had led a decent life. “Auro-metalist,” if it means anything, means one who holds that gold is, or should be, a metal (which was Nature’s view of the matter) but the word gives no hint of what metal he would have in the currency. “Auro-metalist,” quoth’a! You might as well attempt to distinguish an advocate of woman suffrage by calling her a she female. The validity of the *Bulletinese* objection to the word “mono-metalist” is conceded, but what is the matter with “goldwump”?

In his deposition in the case of Judge Clough, Governor Stoneman testified that he “believed” himself the Governor of the State of California—Whereat the wits have changed countenance in an ingenious variety of ways, uttering copious yawpage of derision with assumption of irreverent attitudes, endless. Not so fast, Messrs. Merryman, not so fast; the good man has justification for his doubt. With Harry Dam for Executive Secretary it’s a wise man that knows who’s Governor.

It looks as if some twenty thousand men, women and children in one German town might become a charge upon public charity: a New York clergyman connected with the Peace Society has gone over to persuade Herr Krupp to stop making cannon. It is reassuring to know that the world has still some practical philanthropists unchanged.

A copy of the New Year’s *Chronicle* should be mailed to every inquiring person.—
Chronicle.

Suupose *you* mail one.

A body which had been ten years underground in a metallic “casket” was disinterred the other day, in New York, and on being hoisted from the grave the casket exploded with great violence, wounding the bystanders. There is a suggestion in this for our local dynamiters—a particularly rich one for their leader, our most worthy coroner. If in this way the dead can be made serviceable for warfare on the living there’s economy in it, and also it would sooth the last moments of many a dying patriot to know that his death would open up a new field for practical and effective work in dispelling the Mongolian horde.

“Two dozen Chinamen went,” said A,
“When Kearney’s great skull exploded.”
Said B: “I’m surprised by what you say—
I didn’t know it was loaded.”

Two contusers have been arrested for trying to evade the anti-slogging ordinance by putting an apple of boxing-match into a dumpling of farce. That would seem to be a needless complication of the slogic drama, seeing that every boxing match is itself a farce.

What a bad lot the modern slogger has the happiness to be, as compared with the extinct prize-fighter of our fathers! That fellow was a beast from the ground up. He was as populous of depravities as an exported hog of trichinae. No virtue but courage had courage to be found in him. He would lie like a lecher and so lecher that the lie became him; and had he fished in a river of whisky would have paunched his hook dry ere ever he got a bite. Racking debaucheries so sapped his carcass that he was an outmate of every hospital in all the world. So vile were his tastes that he would sometimes prefer honesty to theft because he thought it the more loathsome, and by his preference he made it so. He was the terror, shame and reproach of civilization, jubilous of the distinction. But he would fight, and fight hard and long. He knew nothing of gate-money, gloves and cheated backers. Heaven send he may recur. This later whelpage of the rose-water ring sickens the age with an immedicable ailing—burly bravoos, pillow-fisted, with intrepid tongues, who, like Peter in the play, will fight if they have the law on their side, hurting barred. Their world's champion—the man whose ever brandishing tongue sets all their white livers quaking like so many bowls of jelly—is hero of a single fight. They have not a broken nose among them—not a nose.

Some of the newspapers are choking with rage because President Cleveland avers there never was a time when newspaper lying was so general and so mean as at present, nor a country under the sun where it flourished as in this. Their denunciations, it appears to me, are a trifle hasty and not altogether intelligent: I do not understand Mr. Cleveland to say that it is wrong.

A San Francisco correspondent of the Lockport, N.Y., *Union* professes to have seen in this city (it was necessary to the story wherewith his mind was charged) “a very beautiful piece of statuary, representing David and Goliah just as the former threw the fatal stone.” Why, here's a noble “group,” truly—David, I suppose, at one end of the gallery, Goliah at the other; for if both are incumbents of one pedestal the sculptor must have assumed that David wielded, not a sling, but a sling-shot. What a fine study in composition this would be: the President of the United States and the Queen of Great Britain telegraphing mutual congratulations on the successful laying of the first Atlantic cable.

I would give the prettiest thing in my possession to understand the mind and motive of a man who is willing or desirous to be one of six thousand to form line and shake hands with the President. It seems to me that such a man must necessarily be a vulgarian, a servile creature and an idiot. This may be an error in the thought; in the utterance it would be obviously unfair—condemnation of one who has done nothing wrong and whose motive I have confessed myself unable to understand. Surely there can be no personal gratification in shaking hands with one who regards it as a hardship to have to shake hands with you; one would suppose it would be felt as a keen humiliation. If it is meant to testify respect and allegiance it lacks the essential value of that act; for he who affirms being unknown to him to whom the affirmation is made, the assurance has no more meaning and validity than if conveyed in an anonymous letter. If some person who has performed the rite will intelligently analyze his motive and have the goodness to expound it to me I shall be greatly obliged to him for assisting me to learn what I frankly confess is the only thing I do not already know.

The Santa Barbara *Independent* wants all the Apaches put on an island. That is a good scheme, worthy neighbour: they could support themselves by fishing, and as the soldiers guarding them could not escape there would be no lack of bait.

Mr. J. W. McCarthy, Clerk of the Supreme Court, is like the Indian's exploded stove in Mark Twain's yarn—"heap gone"; but at the time of writing it is not known that he is accompanied by any public money. It is natural to think so, though, from the immunity from detection and punishment which he enjoyed. Canopy me with the noses of Supreme Court justices and I'll steal their boots from their feet.

General Pope, I observe, denies that he ever "published an order or wrote a letter or made a remark" that his "headquarters would be in the saddle." As the denial season with regard to war matters is now at its height, it is right that the General should have his fling; but as it does not follow that because a man is a distinguished soldier or civilian that his word is to be accepted without question. I wish the story which once set a dozen armies ablaze with inextinguishable laughter would take steps to vindicate itself. My own recollection is that General Pope did issue an order to the Army of the Potomac, which was dated Headquarters in the Saddle, and that this order stated, in effect, that the regime of retreat was at an end. It is certain that I saw what purported to be a copy of such an order, as I presume nearly every staff officer in the Army of the Cumberland did; and I never heard until now of its genuineness being called in question, and I certainly heard the matter discussed dozens of times at as many headquarters. By old West Pointers, too, although General Pope guides us to the inference that the story is an old West Point joke applied to him. If the records do not show such an order, and if nobody comes forward with proof that it was issued, the validity of General Pope's memory must, of course, be conceded and himself held to be a singularly patient victim of a most irritating because most ridiculous slander.

Concerning the credibility of distinguished men (and this has no reference to General Pope, whose article containing his denial I have not read) I should like to say that of all the *Century's* "war-papers" relating to matters of which I had personal knowledge by "eyesight and earsight," hardly one has been free from lying. I don't mean error, but straightforward, methodical, hardy and impenitent falsehood aforethought. Instances? Excuse me; this is not the kind of world in which I am hot to put my word against that of any man who has commanded armies. Make me a major-general if you want the facts.

Because in his latest novel Mr. Bret Harte makes the wife of a gentleman fall in love with an interesting young invalid under her care, who happens to be a robber, a local critic accuses the author of "insulting all American women," and is pleased to observe that "foreign residence has not improved his morals." O come, now, sonny, Harte doesn't say he approves it. He doesn't say "all American women" are that way, and if he did the question raised would, I take it, concern their morals rather than his own. Really, I wonder how Tennyson's personal morals ever escaped this exacting censor's lash, considering how that Guinevere, who certainly was the wife of a rather fine fellow, sloped off with Launcelot, who was not. What an insult to all English women! And then there is that depraved Shakespeare, with his Gertrude, that "most seeming-virtuous queen," Hamlet's mother; and that abominable old rake Homer, and the other Grecian scoundrels, who insulted all the women of the world by relating certain domestic infelicities in the families of Menelaus and Agamemnon. In short, there is pretty nearly the whole corrupt body of famous poets and writers of fiction—to say nothing of the wicked reporters who told us something insulting to womanhood, the other day, about a wife and a letter-carrier. How now?—how say you, Sir Critic? Think ye that

your stupidity, like the secret of Midas' ears, can be spoken in a pit and the listening reeds not blare it abroad? Have a care, lad, have a care, or I'll quote all you print!

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