

The Wasp
February 13, 1886

Science on the Half-Shell

On Saturday night last the Academy of California Sciences pulled itself together, Professor Ornithorangoutang in the Chair. The minutes of the previous palaver having been reduced to hours and found to number fifteen, the Chairman introduced Professor Horace Davis, of Muhlhausen, who read a monograph on the Mealworm, in which that creature's habits were severely reprobated. The paper was listened to with energetic attention. At the close Dr. Behr asked if the reptile under consideration was the ordinary diner-out of commerce—*Gastromagnus gregarim*. Dr. Whitney, rising to a question of privilege and a considerable altitude, hurled back the allegation and explained, with great warmth, that on the contrary it had the honor to be the well known *Desolator proscriptus*, or lunch-fiend; and with a meaning look at Professor J. P. Moore, the fungifer, the speaker added that some folks ought to feel themselves highly honored by the attentions of science. Professor Moore coldly remarked that if the gentleman's unacademical language was meant to apply to him he had only to say that the gentleman's tongue was simply a toad's tool. Further discussion of the Mealworm was prevented by Professor Maynard, who said: "Mister Chairman, if personalities is in horder, 'ere's a scientific gent as would like to be 'eard from—which 'e is a rattlin' good un with 'is 'ands; and if any duffer says I means myself, I says, says I, my observation is hopen to that objection." In making a motion to adjourn, Professor Moore and Dr. Whitney fell over the same spittoon, and the Chairman said that although these gentlemen might differ on minor points of controversy, they had shown themselves in action essentially harmonious.

Professor Sam Davis, the distinguished editor of the *Popular Science Appeal*, published at Carson City, said that he had recently spent some hours in study of the celebrated gigantic footprints of the *Homo Nevadensis*, and with an apology to Dr. Harkness he must say that in his opinion (Mr. Davis') they were made at a comparatively recent period by a local politician, running for office. This brought Dr. Harkness to his feet, which being carefully scrutinized by Professor Davis, that gentleman added, before the other had leave to speak: "Mr. Chairman, it is unnecessary for my friend to say a word: I see two substantial reasons for abandoning my theory." The matter went over.

Dr. Bartlett said: "May it please the Chair, in the last bulletin—" "Order!" cried Professor de Young; "I object, Mr. Chairman, to the gentleman advertising the loathsome sheet with which he is dishonorably connected, by introducing its name into the Halls of Science" "Mr. Chairman," continued Dr. Bartlett, "I was about to say that in the last bulletin" [cries of "order! order!"]—"that in the last bulletin of the Conchological Society of Timbuctoo the *Ostrea volans*, or flying clam, is declared identical with the *Mucilaginosa saltata*—the jumping slug. As Professor Maynard is a distinguished slugger, possibly he may be able to throw some light on the question." The member appealed to having gone home, the matter was by agreement referred to

the Committee on Birds, with instruction to include in the investigation the scientific status of the *Pterimus adobedurus*, or brick bat.

Dr. Homer Sprague, of Mills College, said that in digging a grave in Mountain View Cemetery, some workmen had discovered fragmentary remains of a female autochthon, which he had ventured to name *Magnapeda Quercuterrensis*. He had secured the bones of the great toe of the right foot, and had hoped to have the pleasure of presenting them to the Academy that evening, but a delay had been caused by the breaking down of the truck on which they had been loaded. Professor E. L. G. Steele, of the Alameda County College of Paleontology, rose in his place and asked the Chairman, with some heat, if *Magnapeda Quercuterrensis* might not be construed to mean “big-footed Oakland girl.” The Chairman said that if the member would frame a resolution affirming that view, he would be pleased to put the question and have it settled on the record; but Mr. Steele said that if Professor Sprague had the spirit of a true scientist he would himself prefer to go outside and settle it on the sidewalk. At this point of the proceedings the demeanor of the Oakland members was characterized by so marked a coldness toward the other *savans* that many of the latter are not expected to recover. Adjourned by the police—*miniones legis*.

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