

*The Wasp*  
April 17, 1886

*Prattle*

Poor Chet Arthur! It is hard enough to be ill at all, but in the stomach!—that, indeed, is not light affliction. It was his stomach that made him a national reputation. A well-bred, educated organ—a fine, patrician bowel, nicely and accurately Delmonicated. Chet, if you die, lad (which Heaven forbid!) we shall wear crepe upon our bellies for thirty days, and on your tomb I shall emblazon the following epitaph:

Farewell, sweet soul, whom death has dealt  
A coward blow below the belt.  
To life above, your title's clear—  
High living was your study here.

He was a soldier, it seems—the good Dr. Munhall, revivaler. He fought with material weapons in the civil war and “won distinguished honors” as a color-bearer. He says so himself. “His escape from death was simply a miracle,” as appears from a transcript of his military record—as expounded by himself to a wondering reporter; though, for my part, I don't know which is the greater miracle, the narrowness of his escape or the breadth of his modesty. God, it is writ, exalteth the horn of His people; but Munhall exalts his own, and through that aspiring tube makes utterance of his merit and his valor. O, he is modesty itself. Let him be known as the Swaggering Violet.

The following ill-humorous lines, addressed to Professor Welcker, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, are inspired by the basest motive—envy of his great son, “the Sacramento Shakespeare”:

To widen learning is your special joy,  
And so make readers for your writing boy.  
Mistaken man! how vain your happy care!  
Who soars to a,b,c o'erflies Adair.  
He and the letterless in love unite—  
They know not how to read, nor he to write.

Sacramento's Chief of Police having failed of re-election committed suicide. To a Sacramento man the post of horror is the private station.

A reporter, the other day, called on a score or so of our principal artists and asked each “what is art?” Not one of them knew, and all that they said in reply was incalculably silly. They were a unit, though, in condemning the public for not appreciating the work of which they themselves do not understand the principles and meaning. I do not hold that every able man even among the painters ought to be able to answer off-hand the question What is Art? I do say that a man who, making art his profession, cannot say something valuable and

interesting on the nature of it has not sufficient brains and cultivation to do good work in it. Mr. Story is right: the capable artist must be a man of versatile abilities, accomplished in the learning of his time. Fancy Pheidias, Raffaele, Michelangelo, Durer, asked to define that to which he devoted heart and brain, and replying with a pauper spill of irrelevant drivel! Our artists accomplish nothing because they know nothing. Eyes they have, and they see, hands, and they paint; but let a man paint with his hand alone what he sees only with his eyes and the end of that man is failure. I have no hesitancy in saying that of all the artists whom it has been my privilege to know in San Francisco, not three have had enough of learning and letters to justify them in beginning to draw straight lines with a ruler. As for color, God help them!—their work is so coarse and offensive that it seems to be done with hogments.

The matter of “discourtesy” to the Chinese Minister has been explained to the satisfaction of that dignitary and Secretary Bayard, but Col. Bee is implacable. Under the circumstances, Collector Hager has been advised not to go out without a weapon in his pocket. He carries Col. Jerome.

By the way, in an editorial article showing how groundless was the charge of “discourtesy,” and how unjust to public sentiment in California, the Morning Call spoke of the Embassy once as a “band” and again as a “crowd.”

A meeting has been arranged between the Czar and the Sultan. Betting is about even.

O Mike, have ye heard the good news?

They're gwane to have Home Rule at last;  
An' a Parlyment fine they will chuse,  
An' wurruk's a thing o' the past—  
They'll vote every man an estate  
Wid all he can drink and ate.

Indade it's the blessedest day

We've seen since we landed here  
In America. Whisht! Though—I say—  
Bedad, it's no place to cheer!  
For Home Rule we mustn't hurroo—  
They'll be wantin' it here if we do.

The Rev. Dr. Barrows lectured the other evening on France, of which country he has a high opinion. He naturally thinks well of a country where four million francs annually are subscribed by the people, and thirty millions appropriated by the Government, for “the spread of Christian Knowledge”—which implies abundant fat on the entrails of the reverend spreaders. His bowels yearn for such a land.

Mr. Henry George has declared his conviction that the less we work, the richer the world will be. He thinks one hour a day is enough. I think myself it is an hour too much, and would willingly do my whole duty to the world's exchequer by not working at all. Mr. George will be remembered by many as the former Inspector of Gas Meters in San Francisco. He also writes books.

An Eastern telegram says that there will shortly be introduced a resolution giving Mr. Joseph Newman permission to exhibit samples of Californian silk in the rotunda of the

capitol. This “broad and statesman-like” action has the advantage of my sincerest approval: it sanctifies a principle that “lies at the foundation” of American commercial and agricultural prosperity—the right of an American citizen to use the Temple of Liberty and Law for advancement of the common welfare. I have some new style double-ender pigs which I should like to display there when Mr. Newman’s exhibit is out of the way.

That Mr. Larry Brannigan, alias Lawrence Barrett, the actor, “spent a day with President Cleveland” recently is very creditable to Mr. Barrett; he was ever generous in the disposal of his leisure, parting it all among the distinguished men of two continents and giving the remainder to the poor. It is natural, too, that Mr. Cleveland, speaking in confidence to his famous friend, should severely have condemned some of the errors of the present Administration. But when Mr. Brannigan avers that the President expressed a wish to “kick himself,” human credulity dishonours the draft. I fancy Mr. Brannigan did not rightly understand who it was that the President desired to kick.

There is local option in Oregon with regard to bounties for scalps of wild beasts. Clackamas county pays ten dollars for coyote tops, but the adjoining county of Multnomah will not put up a cent. But Clackamas, with great forethought, has provided that the coyotes for whose effacement she pays shall be killed insider her borders. That is how it happens that the corrals of the coyote breeding-farms on the Multnomah side of the dividing line all have extensions over into Clackamas. Brief and unbrilliant is the career of the Oregon domesticated coyote. He riseth like the sun in Multnomah, but hath his setting in Clackamas. Not his the pleasures of the chase, for of scope he is deprived and dogs are denied him. No ghosts of roosting fowl shriek and clamor in the pale toothshine gleaming nightly from beneath his lifted lip. He is herded by Chinamen and fed with alfalfa. Scarce hath he drawn his wasted limbs through two uneventful years when, urged by goad and lash across the border (for now his scalp is ripe) he resigns his life into the hands of him who gave it, and his spirit is at peace. Such are “the short and simple annals” of the Lupus disgustus—the Oregon coyote of commerce. May his tribe increase; and at ten dollars a scalp it is safe to say it will.

Fifteen thousand men yearly are killed and wounded in the act of coupling cars, and in this country alone more than four thousand patents have been granted for “safety” car-couplings. Observe, young man, this awful waste of talent, and put not your sickle into the barren field. Invent a machine-gun.

“I saw your charms in another’s arms,”  
Said a Grecian swain with his blood a-boil;  
“And he kissed you fair as he held you there  
A willing bird in a serpent’s coil!”

The maid looked up from the cinctured cup  
Wherein she was crushing the berries red,  
Indignant surprise in her honest eyes—  
“It was only one o’ them gods,” she said.

In the Warmedoverland Monthly for April I find one good thing—badly said. Replying to the objection that the Chinese are “incapable of being Christianized,” a writer who is a shoemaker (the Warmedoverland people buy their boots and beg their literature at the same shop) says San Francisco has as many Chinese Christians as White men who pay their outlawed debts. It is a plump-center shot, Crispin: the man who would not pay an

outlawed debt is not a Christian in any sense satisfactory to Christ or creditor. To all the “Christians” whom it is my spiritual advantage to know, death has an added terror in the fact that it is called payment of the debt of nature. If dying were dishonest longevity would be unknown.

Fifteen students have presented themselves for examination for admission to the Nevada State University, but all but three failed. They could sling figgers pizen (I quote the words of the Faculty) and were upper than an eagle in Latin and Greek, but the Professor of the Piute Language and Literature stood ’em up with six questions.

A person writes to a local church paper in praise of General Howard, and the best thing he can think of to say for “the Christian soldier” is that he is a good listener to preaching. Doubtless the worthy preacher thinks this is a strong commendation. It reminds me of a certain amiable old dame who had a town-wide renown for saying something good of every one. One day she attended the funeral of a singularly bad boy—a boy whose depravity was of so awful a character that even his mother felt a visible satisfaction in his death. When the dame of charitable speech approached the coffin everybody listened with suspended breath to hear what she could possibly say in praise of the unlamented dead. She gazed upon the body for some minutes with great tenderness and turned sadly away. “Nice long child,” she said.

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