

The Wasp
June 12, 1886

[Editorial]

That the Chinese on the Pacific Coast are not treated with that delicate consideration and hospitality which is accorded to rattlesnakes and tarantulas is a proposition to which this paper stands committed, and which it begs leave to repeat. Those worthy people who are pained by our assertion that Californian opposition to the "Mongolian horde" takes the form of murder and outrage are respectfully assured that we would warmly welcome a state of facts that would justify us in ceasing to make it. "That fellow calls me a liar every time I meet him," said one man to another; "Ever occur to you to stop *being* one?" asked his friend. Whenever a popular minority, contemptible in numbers and in disposition, shall cease to commit crimes against the property, persons and lives of the Chinese, and another equally contemptible minority controlling the demagogic tongue and the dishonest type shall cease to urge and excuse the outrages at which it dares not assist, we shall be happy to aver that our State is no longer guilty as charged. Whenever our grand juries will indict, our district attorneys prosecute, our trial juries convict, our judges sentence and our sheriffs hang one out of twenty of the white scoundrels who commit obvious and unprovoked assassination of Chinese we shall be pleased to note the facts and plead them in mitigation at the bar of Eastern opinion. We do not at present recollect any instance in which a white person has been hanged in this State for that crime. Is it not significant, too, that our entire Congressional delegation is opposed to the Chinese indemnity bill? Why? Ostensibly because of this and because of that—some on one ground, some on another; actually and unanimously, because the victims of that new and more inhuman "Massacre of Wyoming" were Chinese. In that, at least, California's hands were stainless: the murders were committed hundreds of miles away, the murderers were themselves aliens. For the failure of the territorial courts we were in no sense blamable. Not one of the honorable members of Congress from this State but has repeatedly denounced persecution of Chinese and declared his constituents actuated by the loftiest sentiments of humanity and the strongest loyalty to law and order. Their favor to this most proper, politic and humane measure would have given a color of sincerity to their professions. They did not dare. They feared the cowardly daily newspapers, the hoodlum vote, the political boycott. In the numberless multitude of instances in which the interests of the two races fall foul of one another and the Mongolian sheep impudently bites the Caucasian wayfarer, it must sometimes occur that the Chinese are right. When any Californian daily newspaper or annual politician, assenting to that obvious general truth, will acknowledge a particular instance of it, something will have been done toward obtaining for Californian public opinion as much national consideration as might be commanded by a chattering chickadee in a conference of crows.

We cannot hope to deceive the press and people of the Eastern States; they know from their own correspondents, and from the news columns of our own daily journals which most earnestly affirm our Christian forbearance, that the treatment of Chinese all along this side of the continent is barbarous. The only effect of our denials is to suggest our moral complicity. The outrages which we deny are in fact the strongest reason that can be urged for exclusion.

Let us confess their occurrence and sincerely endeavor to prevent and punish them. We can punish, but not prevent, and by showing that the antagonism is too energetic for control we shall supply a powerful argument to practical statesmanship, which, not concerning itself too much with sentiments however holy, aims to govern men as they are, conceding to human weakness, prejudice and passion their just importance as factors in a political problem. Apart from all considerations of justice and feeling, it is by no means clear that Jake Hoodlum's bloody persecution of John Chinaman is a disadvantage to the cause of restriction. The importance of unlawful means to the attainment of a desirable end is easily underestimated. Whatever progress Ireland has made toward the goal of self-government is directly due to a policy of assassination—a regime of outrage. If she had not pounded at the gates of justice with the bludgeon and struck them challenging blows with the haft of the dagger they would never have been opened to her though she had bruised her bleeding palms in centuries of appeal. By persistence in shotgunning, the Southern Whites reclaimed their forfeited political dominance, compelling us to withdraw from the Negro the protection that exposed him to peril. In the narrow sense naturally commending itself to politicians and newspapers, it is doubtless expedient to let the fires of racial hatred burn brightly here on the Pacific shore. There are better things than political expediency, but as the newspapers and politicians are unacquainted with them, it is worthwhile to point out their error in endeavoring to spike their heaviest guns. For our part, we are greatly more concerned about the truth than we are about political results. God made us that way and it is useless to repine.

The question has been often asked, What becomes of the brightest girl in the seminary? It has been observed that after she graduates (which she does in a corruscation of literary fireworks) she disappears from life and letters like a candle dropped into a well. We have "got onto" the secret. She goes into some interior town, and, until her successress in class honors relieves her there the next year, supplies the *Call* with a weekly letter of local news. Every Sabbath-day edition of that admirable journal contains a number of such letters equal to the number of young ladies' seminaries in the State: all under the gracious heading "Our Sister Cities." From among the signatures to those of Sunday last we select the following: "Belinda," "Florence," "Di," "Josie," "Naomi," "Eileen," "Roxie," "Emelie" and "Evangeline." Slander's envenomed tooth whispers (as Mr. John P. Irish would say) that these are but different "aliases" of that rare old literary masquerader, Mr. Loring Pickering; but, as Sir Boyle Roche with great penetration explained, a man can't be in many places at once unless he is a bird. Still, the conception of Mr. Pickering, sitting among his country exchanges with a pair of scissors in each hand and a paste-brush in the other, his hair banded and his body appareled in school-girl attire to sustain the illusion is a picture which the imagination does not willingly let go.

The unneighborly tendency of Canadian greed to scoop our piscatorial marine has engendered a good deal of exalted patriotism and headlong intrepidity among "the whiskered Pandours and the fierce Hussars" of our local press; and it is with difficulty that some of these warlike editors can induce anybody to undertake the duty of holding them. They want to fight Great Britain so bad they can't eat. We are not suffering from that affliction. If the United States are in the wrong about this thing we want to back down as far as we can get and pay a good square indemnity; if in the right, we hope a simple apology and a promise of good behavior will be accepted as sufficient reparation. Secretary Bayard cannot go too slow in his negotiations with the British Foreign Office to suit our patient and tardy spirit. The *Wasp* office is situated within easy cannon-throw of deep water. In case of a war with Great Britain our fortifications would not, we fear, amuse one of her iron-clads long enough to enable us to collect what is due us from subscribers and advertisers and find a good purchaser for our

plant and goodwill. We have also business interests in New York, relatives in Boston and personal friends in Philadelphia. Under the circumstances, the field of glory has no charms for us; we have all the military fame we want, and Generals Backus and Sheehan of the *Evening Post* are welcome to the rest, or we will give it to the poor. The cheerful patter of steel bolts and iron globes weighing a long ton each is a music that is too classical for our untutored ear; we will take a back seat when the concert begins. For our more courageous contemporaries we feel a profound admiration unmixed with envy; and if it comes to bangwhanging it is to be hoped those will get the most of it who have put in the first and highest bids; our humbler ambition doesn't run to personal disruption and the loss of paying subscribers by dismemberment. So long as Congress relies on the Divine favor for the national defense we propose to imitate the Prince of Peace as hard as we know how, and remember the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." If an American fishing schooner is smitten on the port cheek she will gratify this journal the most by turning the starboard. Colonel Pixley, Colonel de Young and Colonel Fitch may shake out the War-flag and rally round it, as in the brave days of old, but we are not that way. Whenever Queen Victoria lays off her crown, rolls up her sleeves and spits on her rosy little palms we favor the policy of approaching her with an orange in each hand.

Telegraphic terseness is a fruitful cause of misunderstanding. The other day a dispatch from Chicago said that ex-Senator Davis was there, suffering from a large carbuncle on the arm. The next day a dispatch from Deer Park (Md.) stated that President Cleveland had been seen there, on the arm of Mr. Davis. The apparent contradiction is easily explained: there are two Davises—and two carbuncles.

Again the Eastern war-clouds lower,
The nations all alarming,
For treacherous Greece augments her power
By secretly disarming,
And strengthens daily her frontier
By nightly marches to the rear.

Judge Murphy has signed the death-warrant of that disagreeable woman killer, Dr. J. Milton Bowers, and on July 30th we may reasonably hope to be well rid of him. If Judge Murphy was as "deeply affected" in setting his hand to the death warrant as he was in pronouncing the sentence the paper probably had to be dried and the salt scraped off. He is a person of dampness, this Judge Murphy—he hath a lachrymose diathesis. In sentencing this detestable blackguard he quite broke down and, swamped in his own tears, came near being washed off his feet. Doubtless he is an honest chap, this ready weeper—though it has never been our happiness to know a sentimentalist who was but we submit that in their habit of disclosing so wet a sense of their "responsibility" our judges are guilty of an arrogance amounting almost to effrontery. It is not their sentence which hangs a man; it is the verdict of the jury. Where one has no choice one has no responsibility: pronouncing sentence is a merely formal and now almost meaningless ceremony. The custom of blubbing about it is a survival from a remote antiquity, when juries were unknown and the sentence was the verdict—"the judgment of the court," as it is still called, although for centuries it has not had that character. Manweeping in public is always a sufficiently disagreeable rite to assist at, but when a high official, twenty-one years of age, free born and half white, gets upon the legs of him before all manner of people, dogs included, and lubricates the performance of a dry duty with tears of tradition—sniveling because, under similar circumstances, his predecessors have

sniveled before him, and they because theirs boohooded under essentially different ones, the show is repulsive no end.

Dan Murphy, you're a judge—preserve your ermine,
Nor Boil it slaving on human vermin:
With manly dignity discharge your trust,
Nor waste your tears to lay a villain's dust.

Such courageous gentlemen and confident patriots as Mr. De Young and Mr. Frank Roney can cheaply sneer at the denunciations of our “Scientific Socialists” by the Seattle grand jury, but this is nevertheless a dangerous and pernicious organization. It aims at nothing less than the obliteration of all forms of authority and the substitution of anarchy for law. It has been a malevolent influence in fomenting such class antagonisms and race hostilities as we have, and its mischievous activity will do more in the future than it has done in the past if it is not checked. When the Seattle grand jurors affirmed its agency in inciting the riots in that town they knew exactly what they were speaking of, and they told the frozen truth. Of the man Danielwitz, whom they mention as the Secretary of this permanent conspiracy against liberty, life and property, we know nothing; the guiding bad spirit is Mr. Burnette G. Haskell, who is not the less dangerous because he has a gentleman's career behind him. A fallen gentleman is one of the ugliest forces with which civilization has to deal. Mr. Haskell has had a quarrel with Law and is revenging himself upon Order. Wounded by truth, he has made an offensive alliance with falsehood. Across the ever widening gulf between himself and respectability he shakes a fist that is not altogether impotent, for it encloses a dynamite bomb. The object of his organization is to infect, corrupt, control and finally pervert those of honest men. With this purpose he is active in the Knights of Labor—“not quite a robber yet but half a Knight,” and not at all a laborer. It may suit our senseless republican optimism to ignore such men while their serpents are in the egg it suited the authorities of Chicago; but our own notion is that the best time to fight a dragon is when it is little. It is our judgment that Mr. Haskell and his whole rascalry of “Scientific Socialists” might advantageously be effaced—the manner of effacement to be determined by the exigencies of the situation as it shall develop under close official scrutiny.

By the defeat of his Home Rule bill the “grand old man” has not lost all his prestige; his “grandeur” has suffered a notable abatement, but he is still an “old man.” To have saved that much from the wreck is a good deal. We take it (writing before the announcement) that dissolution is assured, and no American citizen whose sympathies take the trouble to form entangling alliances in European politics could wish for a better result. The attitude of the English people toward the scheme of Irish self-government is as yet a matter of conjecture to everybody but our own editors and “prominent citizens.” *They* “feel no hesitancy” in declaring it altogether favorable; but then they are equally hot to affirm the same of public opinion in the United States—of which there is absolutely no good evidence. He who accepts as such the utterances of our “prominent citizens” and daily newspapers, making no allowance for the dictatorial efficacy of the Irish vote and the Irish advertisement, may justly boast that his opinions are independent alike of the facts of observation and the light of common sense. As American popular sympathy has cut a pretty large figure in the debate on Home Rule for Ireland, it is only right to explain that the trend of its current has not as yet been ascertained. The ear which in the pauses of the demagogic clamor and its editorial echo has not heard the deep, low note of popular dissent is an imperfect organ. We state the simple truth, with neither approval nor deprecation, but merely as an observer, when we say that one of the strongest and most obvious traits of the American character is a quiet, intense dislike of

the Irish people. To this sentiment the demagogues (stupidest and most unthrifty of men) have not yet learned the trick of hitching their political fortunes. That an appeal to it, at long intervals and in dulcet words, may have at least a commercial advantage is sufficiently attested by the prosperity of our distinguished townsman, Mr. Frank Pixley.

Whatever opinions we may ourselves entertain as to the treatment of the Chinese by our indiscriminal classes, we are indisposed to concede to any “missionary” the right to inject himself into the discussion. A half-dozen of these truly good persons have memorialized Congress in behalf of their hobby, averring the sufficiency of the present restriction law and affirming the beneficial agency of low wages—matters concerning which the missionary understanding is imperfectly informed and imperfectly capable of utilizing information. We submit that these cobblers of souls are going beyond their lasts. Let them, as children of light, urge what they will “for the greater glory of God” (by implication always defectively glorious) but when they get off the ecclesiastical roof, endeavor to balance themselves on the unfamiliar ground of practical affairs, and make a bad stagger at it, the demand for their admonishment is imperative and urgent. These reverend gentlemen will have the goodness to accept this blunt secular intimation that their subsidence will be popularly understood as annulling the necessity of their suppression.

It is probably expected that we will “slate” the writers of all that emotional Stuff about Mr. Cleveland and his bride. Not at all: all other things being equal, and the feet equally clean, it seems to us that a newspaper man’s long, lithe tongue is better employed in exploring the recesses of the presidential toes than in sliming the knobby substructures of the local *parvenu*, the social impostor and the ambitious Bidy. And Mr. Joseph Irwin, the distinguished society annalist, is of the same opinion.

“Slumming” has had its day in London and been succeeded by “kidding.” This is now highly fashionable, and as soon as the east wind is loaded up with its infection it will be transmitted to New York and handed across the continent to us. “Kidding” is nothing less novel than a sudden outbreak of what the phrenologers call philoprogenitiveness; in visible manifestation it consists in publicly caressing one’s dambabies. The dambaby of another will do if the kidder be not herself endowed with one, or has generously presented it to a foundling asylum, or trumped a doorstep with it. The new vice is so singular, not to say monstrous, a social upshoot that it must have its roots deep down among some of the most obscure and baleful forces and functions of human nature. It is perhaps a random revival of the dark depravity that distinguished the pre-Adamite period—a fantastic reversion to original sin. Addiction to the love of dambabies has never wholly died out among the lower classes, the females of which have frequently been observed fondling their young in broad daylight and without apparent shame; so it may be that “kidding” is the successor of “slumming” in something more than a chronological sense, the ladies of the fashionable world (our world) having incurred it by contagion in the slums. The craze is not altogether unwelcome: in the unfamiliar lullabies of the fashionable dam hypnotizing her whelp, the whole race of parlor dogs—pugs, plugs, mastyffs, dalmations, poodles, kioodles, exposers, draggers and bolsters— will hear their doom and sneak under oblivion’s remotest sofa. The advent of the human pet will put their noses out of joint irreparably—which, considering the use they commonly make of those organs, is a result earnestly to be desired by all good men and cleanly women.

What said Blaine of Saliaburee?
“Brutal Paddycide is he!”

What said Salisburee of Blaine?
“After Irish votes again!”
What said Satan when he heard?
Not a single blessed word;
But he thought: “If such their spleen
When an ocean rolls between,
I’ll not know, at their decease,
How (in H—) to keep the peace.”

It is announced that Representatives Henley, Markham and Loutitt are fatigued of “legislative honors” and anxious to retire to private life at the end of their terms. It is most imprudent of them to talk that way: if some “party manager” having control of the nominations should sweat himself to death laboring to alter their resolution many worthy people whose political support is worth having would call it murder.

“Party feeling runs high” in Indiana: at Booneville in that State Messrs. Gentry and Agee recently locked horns on some of the “leading issues of the day,” and Mr. Gentry attested the correctness of his view by cutting the other man’s throat. This, we think, was going too far: we find no express prohibition of such an act in Cushing’s Manual, and in the early days of the Republic similar “parliamentary tactics” were not uncommon in the “halls of legislation”; but it is doubtful if any issue “squarely made” was ever settled in that way which might not equally well have been determined with an ink-stand or spittoon. Zeal and sincerity in the cause of political truth are shining virtues, but even if the party alliances of these gentlemen had been reversed, and Mr. Gentry had been a Republican (which he was not) he would hardly have been justified in cutting Mr. Agee’s throat.

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