

The Wasp
January 30, 1886

Prattle

The mad dog season has opened early in the East. It is usually coincident in point of time with the new Potato, but this year the bite-wave struck New Jersey soon after the holidays and is now sweeping across the country in the direction of Texas, and “crowded cities wail its stroke.” In Europe the dogs were even more forehanded than in this country. As early as last November the rabiometer in the north of France indicated a remarkable low pressure over a wide area, the bit-center moving rapidly across into Germany, followed by a great roller of hydrophobia that overwhelmed whole populations. Thence it advanced to the westward of Vienna, cut across to Rome and launched into the Mediterranean. Striking the line of commerce between the Suez Canal and Gibraltar, it followed it to the latter place, the dogs of nearly every ship being affected. After passing the Straits it was lost; at least the meagre reports from dog-carrying ships on the Atlantic have not permitted it to be traced; and it is not known if this is the same bite-wave which broke upon the New Jersey coast, or if that had its origin in the Esquimau country, coming southward along the line of coastwise trade—in which most of the small craft carry from three to seven dogs each.

In both Europe and America the results have been unusually disastrous, no such mortality having been experienced in any year since 1880. A peculiarity of the present affliction is that while Man has suffered more than usual, Dog has been more lightly touched—or, rather, while Dog has been more lightly touched than usual, he has more skilfully touched Man. A smaller quantity of dog has been operating, but it has bitten with uncommon diligence and assiduity, and the bites are of superior quality. Naturally, a good deal of thought is given to remedies and preventives, and one infamous miscreant whose possessions lie in the route of the approaching desolation has gone so far as to suggest the starting of a back-fire, so to say, by exterminating Man’s best and noblest friend, the delight of his soul and protector of his person, his playmate in childhood, companion in manhood and stay in age—the Dog!

By the way, I observe that a certain Dr. Geary, of Oakland, keeps two large dogs at his residence (most Oaklanders keep three) which “do not molest anyone who lifts his hat to them on entering the yard.” This is magnanimous moderation. In a country where dogs are kept for the sole and sufficient purpose of insulting, terrifying and injuring visitors and persons passing in the public highways, Dr. Geary’s tenderness entitles him to a statue. A distinct advance has been made when an American citizen can save himself from laceration by performing an act of deference to a dog.

I suppose I am a crank about dogs. I have never to my recollection been bitten nor frightened by one; but if ever I call a second time at a house where one has threatened me, or ever afterward recognize its master except to chastise him, you may eat me without salt. And if ever a dog takes to a public road to annoy me or my horse and escapes with its life, know all men by these presents that I have missed that dog. And I should like to add, for the

purpose of a good understanding with lovers of dogs generally, that my desire for the distinction and advantage of their acquaintance—not the dogs' acquaintance—is a passion whose fervency is distinctly polar. The man who after discharging upon himself all of his own affection that himself has the capacity to hold, lets any of the overflow run to waste upon a dog, when the world is full of women and children, is not, in my humble judgment, in the right road to heaven; and if he were I should pray that some scurvy cur might jump into that highway and snatch a mouthful of tendons out of his lower leg.

The following report of a preliminary examination in Department Thirteen of the Superior Court is prepared from the unofficial record.

THE JUDGE: Dr. McDonald, you are charged with having wantonly shot to death one David Mish, which it appears you did. Have you anything to say why you should not be committed for trial?

THE PRISONER: Yes, your Honor: on the night of the shooting one of the unfortunate young man's bereaved relatives said to a reporter of the *Bulletin*: "Every one knew Dave to be such a nice young man. He never smoked, nor drank, nor endeavoured to be at all fast, like many young men." Now, your Honor, I –

THE JUDGE: Enough. Mr. Sheriff, let the prisoner be discharged from custody.

The BEREAVED RELATIVE (aside): Holy Moses, what a miscarriage of justice! It was not true!

I dreamed that I was poor and sick and sad,
Broken in hope and weary of my life;
My ventures all miscarrying—naught had
For all my labor in the heat and strife;
And in my heart some certain thoughts were rife
Of an unsummoned exit. As I lay
Considering my bitter state, I cried:
"Alas! that hither I did ever stray:
Better in some fair country to have died
Than live in such a land, where Fortune never
(Unless he be successful) crowns Endeavor."

Then, even as I lamented, lo! there came
A troop of Presences—I knew not whence
Nor what they were: thought cannot rightly name
What's known through spiritual evidence,
Reported not by gross material sense.
"Why come ye here?" I seemed to cry (though naught
My sleeping tongue did utter) to the first—
"What are ye?—with what woful message fraught?
Ye have a ghastly look, as ye had burst
Some sepulchre in memory. Weird creatures,
I'm sure I'd know ye if ye had but features."

Some subtle organ noted the reply
(Inaudible to ear of flesh the tone):
"The Finest Climate in the World am I,
From Siskiyou to San Diego known—
From the Sierra to the sea. The zone

Called semi-tropical I've pulled about
And placed it where it does most good, I trust.
I shake my never-failing bounty out
Alike upon the just and the unjust."
"That's very true," said I, "but when 'tis shaken
My share by the unjust is ever taken."

"Permit me," it resumed, "now to present
My eldest son, the Champagne Atmosphere,
And others to rebuke your discontent—
The Mammoth Squash, Strawberry All the Year,
The fair No Lightning—flashing only here—
The Wholesome Earthquake and Italian Sky,
With its Unstriking Sun; and last, not least,
The Compos Mentis Dog. Now, ingrate, try
To bring a better stomach to the feast:
When Nature makes a dance and pays the piper,
To be unhappy is to be a viper!"

"Why, yet," said I, "with all your blessings fine
(And Heaven forbid that I should speak them ill)
I yet am poor and sick and sad. Ye shine
With more of splendour than of heat: for still,
Although my will is warm, my bones are chill."
"Then warm you with enthusiasm's blaze—
Fortune waits not on toil," they cried; "O then
Join the wild chorus clamouring our praise—
Throw up your beaver and throw down your pen!"
"Begone!" I shouted. They bewent, a-smirking,
And I, awakening, fell straight a-working.

I stated in these columns the week before last that, "in the January *North American Review* General Beauregard affirms his supreme command of the Confederate Army at Shiloh on both days of the battle." This is entirely false: he distinctly says that General Johnston was "first in command," he "second." I had not read the article when I wrote the paragraph, but took the word of a theretofore apparently respectable local newspaper. Whenever I wish to tell another falsehood I'll believe another newspaper: whom the gods would have a liar they first make a fool.

The Sharon "bequest" of fifty thousand dollars to the public park is to be expended in building a gate-way. Thank Heaven, we shall at last be able to get in and out without tearing our clothes in climbing the fence?

The gate-way, by the by, is to bear the name "Sharon" in conspicuous letters, which is right. But why not, also, the names of Newlands and the other heirs, who are the real donors? I'll be boiled in wine if the good old man ever made any such bequest!

One cannot denounce the cold with much emphasis when he has a plate of fresh oranges and a bunch of violets on the table.—*Bulletin*.
Can it be he's cold.

The fruits of the “peaceable and lawful” expulsion of Chinese are ripening apace: the Yellowbellies who were recently persuaded to take a walk out of Eureka have sued in the United States Court for \$132,000, some just portion of which they will doubtless recover. What our people seem to forget is that behind every Chinaman stands a lawyer.

With *After Twenty Years* poor Ciprico
Fishes for immortality. But lo!
Bait, hook, line, reel and rod alike are rotten,
And after twenty years he’ll be forgotten.

It is stated that Secretary Bayard’s daughter was “killed by a conscientious determination to perform every social duty.” There is no such thing as a “social duty.” Any one free under the law, who gives or attends entertainments, or makes or receives calls and visits, for any other reason than that it is a pleasure to do so performs, not an act of duty but an act of folly. Against this view it may be urged that its general adoption would level the whole “social” fabric to its foundation. I confess it is open to that objection.

“You gave me a solemn promise,” said he;
“Do you mean to keep it—now tell me true.”
“Can you eat your cake and have it?” said she—
“Can I give a promise and keep it, too?”

The sunken section of the sea-wall has been rebuilt at an expense of only three per cent above the estimate. This excess was caused by an unforeseen rise in the price of cork jackets. The next section of the wall will be built on a raft.

The author of a book on “Oakland and its Surrounding” has minutely described Berkeley and left out San Francisco! There is nothing too mean for local jealousy to stoop to.

Of Clerk McCarthy’s bondsmen, it turns out that one is bankrupt and the other dead. It is “a long established custom” for public officials to seek bondsmen in places where people, seeing them searching, suppose them to be secretly administering charity; but this drawing upon the resources of the graveyard is a new thing. Its ingenuity justifies us in expecting the happiest results. When I am elected Inspector of Orphans, if I don’t have ex-Senator David Broderick on my bond you may boil me in wine.

(Source: Archive.org, <https://archive.org/stream/waspjanjune188616unse#page/n32/mode/1up>)