

*San Francisco Examiner*  
September 25, 1898

*Apocryphal Conversations*

*Dreyfus; Esterhazy*

Esterhazy.—You must try to pardon me, monsieur, but your punishment was demanded by considerations of the highest military importance.

Dreyfus.—For example?

Est.—If you had not been punished I should have been punished myself.

Dr.—But I am innocent and you are guilty.

Est.—Yes, monsieur, but what has that to do with it? Your long absence from the army appears—pardon me—to affect your mind: you talk like a Judge of the Court of Cassation. You need rest, recreation, society, civilization—in a word, Paris.

Dr.—If I could only persuade Paris that it needs me! Pray, tell me, though, what important military interest or principle that was promoted by my conviction would have been damaged by my acquittal?

Est.—Justice.

Dr.—Monsieur!

Est.—The Jews would have thought they had as good a chance as anybody.

*Sampson; Gage; M'Kinley; Schley*

Gage.—As Secretary of the Treasury I am naturally concerned about the expense of the war. The navy appears to have cost us something; are you sure that you kept the expenses of your fleet down as much as possible?

Sampson.—Positive.

G.—Is it true that it costs more than a thousand dollars to fire some of your big guns?

S.—About fifteen hundred, I think. The small ones cost less.

G.—But they are fired more frequently—much more frequently, I'm told.

S.—That is how we economize. If the smaller guns did not get so hot we could effect a still greater saving.

G.—You bombarded those old fortifications at the entrance to Santiago harbor furiously, did you not—and several days, altogether?

S.—You should have heard me!

G.—Did you destroy any forts, silence any batteries, dismount any guns?

S.—Yes.

G.—On your honor as a sailor?

S.—Yes.

G.—As you hope for promotion?

S.—Well, no.

G.—How many Spaniards did you kill?

S.—Three thousand.

G.—On your honor as a sailor?

S.—Yes.

G.—As you hope—

S.—About a dozen.

G.—Rather ordinary Spaniards, too, were they not?

S.—Very valuable to Spain; they didn't cost her much for their keep and she never paid them anything.

G.—That's what I was getting at. Had they done us any harm?

S.—No; they didn't hit a ship; I wouldn't let them.

G.—Just so. Now I am about to make certain suggestions in my annual report to accompany the President's message, and should like the advantage of your judgment on them. From your experience and observation in war don't you think it would be greatly cheaper and quite as safe for the United States to pay the expenses of equipment and maintenance of a hostile sea fort—including a fair interest on the original cost—and to feed, clothe, pay and doctor the soldiers than to fight it with ships?

S.—No.

G.—On your—(Enter McKinley.)

S.—No.

G.—As you—

S.—Repeat your question.

McKinley.—Ah, Sampson, delighted to meet you, Please accept from me the profound gratitude of the American people for the courage and masterly skill with which you (enter Schley) conducted the naval operations before Santiago de Cuba.

Schley.—Mr. President, I called to see if you would like to buy a dog.

*Bryan; Lee*

Bryan.—The president is magnanimous past all praise; he could not have been more careful not to expose us to danger if we had been his father.

Lee.—And had no property.

B.—I wonder if this administration's intentions ever leak out. When my appointment to a colonelcy was first published a certain life insurance company solicited my custom, offering me a specially low rate. The event has justified the venture.

L.—Yes, and my heart swelled with pride today when a Democratic newspaper mentioned me as "that immortal soldier."

B.—And my regiment is called "the Nebraska Immunes."

L.—A good many persons thought that I should have led at Santiago, instead of a man who had never moved a command so large as six companies.

B. (aside).—My sympathies would have been with Toral.

L.—My victory might have been known as "The Taking of Washington." Ah, well, you at least have gained a title that you did not have before: "Colonel Bryan" will sound well—(aside): too damn well!—in the mouths of the people.

B.—There are so many colonels in this country. Did you hear about the remark of the governor of Nebraska when I asked him for a commission? “So,” said he, “you tire of distinction. Very well, I will promote you to the ranks: be a colonel.”

L.—(writing in pocket book)—“Memorandum for delegates to Democratic national convention: Colonel Bryan solicited his own commission.” And what did the elephant find in his trunk?

B.—Elephant? What elephant?

L.—I beg your pardon—weren’t you telling a joke or something? Forgive my absence of mind.

B.—I would forgive your absence of body.

*Miss Flood; Martin Kellogg; Dr. Jordan*

Miss Flood.—I wish to see the president of the University of California.

Martin Kellogg.—That is I, though I’m not much to look at, they say.

Miss F.—Here are two and a half million dollars.

M.K.—(pocketing the coin).—Thanks awfully. Is there anything in particular that you’d like to have for it?

Miss F.—The satisfaction of having done a good deed.

M.K.—Take it, madam. (Aside) Gad, it comes high!

Miss F.—There is one condition.

M.K.—(singing).—

The String, the String is a stronger thing  
Than the hate of a girl or the will of a king!

Miss F.—There is no string to this gift; all that I ask is that it be used to promote commerce.

M.K.—The very thing that we have been most desirous to promote, but lacked the means. Our College of Commerce will now indeed be a living influence in the land—the brightest jewel in our crown of honor. Ah, madam you are our greatest and dearest benefactress—permit me to weep upon your hand. (She permits him to weep upon her hand; exit Miss Flood). Commerce be gam doodled, and may the devil fly away with it! Commerce is what’s the matter with us; we’re a community of swoppers and swipers. Our highest conception of commerce is putting one’s arm into one’s neighbor’s pocket up to the elbow; and there is no truer conception except putting it in up to the shoulder. To what base uses has Education come! Our foremost university, with its College of dentistry and its College of Commerce—a training school for tooth-pullers and drummers! I’ll bolt the outfit! (Throws the money into Strawberry Creek and resigns, leaving a large hole. Enter Dr. Jordan with a rod-and-line and his mouth full of works.)

Dr. Jordan.—Won’er ifs any ushe fifflin’ in ’at ’ole.

*Wilhelm; Faure; Li Hung Chang*

Faure.—Sapristi! It ees very goot—vot you cann un gret damfine show to see ow you loaf each uzzer—you an’ my fren McKeenlee!

Wilhelm.—Dots our puisness, don't it? Oof you dono'd like it I sbit in your eye so you don'd see it, hay?

F.—Non, M'sieu merci. You keep ze speetle, for pretty soon l'Oncle Sam he haf ze leisure to invite you to swallow eet. Zen you haf ze deesteengueesh honor to obey so queeckly zat you joke. An' ze Goddamsn zey keeck you out of China, too, an leetle Jp he laugh wiz bose longs ze loud laugh zat speaks ze vacant mind.

W.—I don'd guess all doze dings dake blace righd avay off, und meandime ve drinks. Zwei lager, kellner! Vell Vrenchy, bere's to Elsass und—

F.—Sacre nom!—take zat! An' zat! An' zat!

W.—Donner und blitzten! Vhere is Admiral von Diederichs? (Enter Li Hung Chang with manuscript report to his Emperor.)

Li Hung Chang (reading).—May it please you, O Son of the Seventeen Heavens, I have the unhappiness to observe among the dogs of darkness that govern Europe a rapprochement amounting almost to cordiality.