

*The Wasp*  
June 19, 1886

**[Editorial]**

The appointment of Mr. W. J. Bryan as Postmaster, to succeed that distinguished warrior, General Backus, marks with a significant emphasis the close of the Great Rebellion. With a civilian in the presidential chair and another in the San Francisco post office, the work of restoring the civil dominance in national affairs may be called complete: the military arm is now perfectly subordinated and men of peace will henceforth have a controlling voice in the national "destinies." With the retirement of General Backus to the tranquility of a private life rich in memories of glorious services as a commissary sergeant, the power of the sword is withdrawn and Gordian knots of governmental policy will hereafter be patiently untied with finger and tooth. It would be too much to say that Mr. Bryan's appointment is "hailed with delight" by the entire Democratic party: a formidable dissent is headed by such powerful statesmen as Messrs. English, Walsh, Tully, Moulder, Davies, White, Hastings and Gwin—each of whom has a strong following in all the others. Judge Buckley, on the contrary, is understood to be well satisfied and has renounced his intention of "sulking in his tent." Generally speaking, the action of Mr. Cleveland in conferring the highest local honors upon a competent druggist commands the approbation of those who best know the condition of the party. A physician would have been better, but none cared to take the case.

It is probably not true that there is an immoral emanation from the horse, affecting all who habitually expose themselves to its baleful influence by becoming a portion of the animal's immediate environment; nevertheless it is not to be doubted that for some occult reason for which this fanciful theory is a tolerably convenient expression men who have overmuch to do with horses, and in whom love of that quadruped exhibits some of the phases of religious fervor, hold many of the cardinal virtues by a most precarious tenure. Even the best born and best bred of them appear to be always perilously near to the line separating the domain of morality from the region of velveteen coats, lady's leg canes and flamboyant neckwear. It is therefore with temperate and restrained enthusiasm that we note the quickening growth of the horse-race interest in this country and its gradual encroachment on the fields of religion, literature, art, local politics and other time-honored departments of human activity and endeavor. The fact that a horse-race offers to the hopeful fool and fooless easy facilities for gambling at an immense disadvantage—whereby they are made acquainted with grief—must be accepted (with reluctance) as a cheering circumstance in this dismal business; but it is the only touch of light in the somber picture. The growing disposition to horsiness in the sixty millions of a hitherto but partly immoral population is profoundly deplorable; the regime of the velveteen coat will be unfavorable to the genesis of national worth. More and more our village magnates, ammoniacally convened, will hold social caucus in livery stables, discussing with imperfect profit all human interests without exciting any in their equine audience. With greater and greater

assiduity will American youth embellish the colloquial vocabulary with the terminology of the turf. Ampler and ampler space in the newspapers will be allotted to “events” at Sheepshead Bay and Heaven knows where beside, to the exclusion of society news, the market reports and Congressional debates. These and a thousand other dejecting phenomena must ensue because this great and glorious nation prefers to have less practical common sense than that simple old bird, the Shah of Persia, who when invited by the Prince of Wales to attend the Derby said: “It is already known to me that one horse can run faster than another.”

Well, friend *Examiner*, your fight is fought:  
Sedgwick is “out”—“and injured,” let us add.  
But now that all the mischief has been wrought,  
Both by and to him, don’t you think it sad  
That to the accomplishment of good you brought  
Accomplishments conspicuously bad?  
Lies all are poison, brother, yet I’m fearful  
You’d rather have a mouthful than an earful.

That’s where you’re wrong, lad: it is better far  
To suffer falsehood than inflict it. See?  
You *don’t* see? Well, observe: ’Tis what you are  
Not what you’re called, that fixes your degree  
Of worth. You? character it cannot mar  
To call you “liar,” yet you’d fight to free  
Yourself from that unpleasant accusation.  
Then wherefore *be* one with such resignation ?

In all such combats when men sound the horn—  
This is to say, the ink-horn—what’s the prize  
Wherewith each hopes his prowess to adorn?  
Success, of course. But he succeeds who tries  
Successfully to stay his foeman’s scorn—  
Successfully that foeman to despise.  
It follows then you’re licked, for it is plain you  
Permitted Johnny Sedgwick to disdain you.

“A motion of the hand toward the hip-pocket” should be formally declared in the statutes of the State a capital offense, punishable, like other capital offenses, by indictment, commitment, visitation of tendinous old virgins, nose-gays, trial, conviction, appeal, retrial, disagreement of the jury and discharge of the accused. Practically, and by force of public opinion, it is a capital offense now; but this *lex non scripta* provides a mode of punishment which has none of the awful majesty of the proceedings for disciplining the man whose occupation is murder: the malefactor who makes a “motion toward his hip-pocket” is summarily shot, and judicial proceedings are reserved for the innocent man who shot him—a most injurious and unjust allotment of liability. Obviously the public-spirited citizen who fitly punishes a crime should not himself be molested. The present system is defective also in the matter of evidence: none is permitted. The fact that the person accused of making “a motion toward the hip-pocket as if to

draw a pistol” could usually prove (if spared) that he had no pistol, nor even a hip-pocket, is of small importance—the soul of the crime is in the motion—but he might advantageously be permitted to testify that no movement was made. When accuser and judge are one, and punishment antedates accusation, this is imperfectly possible. In horror and detestation of the crime of “making a movement as if to draw a pistol,” we yield precedence to none, but the system of summary punishment by private enterprise opens the door to grave abuses, as even Mr. Hall McAllister must admit: to get rid of one whose existence is distasteful you have only to shoot him down, put a lucifer match in the stiffening fingers of his right hand and say he made a movement toward his hip pocket. The match is not absolutely necessary, but it will give weight to your accusation by making it seem probable that the deceased was going to scratch it on the dome of his trousers.

This year’s personal property roll shows a decrease of \$1,299,483 from last year in a total assessment of \$54,893,439. Assessor Holtz obligingly explains it by saying that San Francisco being no longer the only distributing point for the trade of the Pacific Coast, our merchants carry smaller stocks than formerly, and that it has been a hard year anyhow. This is the idlest nonsense and nobody knows it better than he. We do not say that the facts are not as he states them; we only deny that they had anything to do with the shrinkage, unless to suggest it. There is never an assessment of personal property in this city that is within fifty per cent of its actual value; to assign commercial reasons to account for fluctuations of one or two per cent, in an estimate that is habitually, arbitrarily and designedly false is to be ridiculous. The effect of commercial depression could be discernible only by comparison of two true assessments: the figures of Mr. Holtz’s first assessment were determined by the necessity of roughly conforming to Mr. Badlam’s last; if that had been ninety millions his would have been somewhere about ninety-five millions—for there was a popular demand for “reform.” Owing to the causes he mentions (operating in his mind) the present total would probably have been as low as ninety-three millions and a cent.

We observe a singularly benevolent tendency among our contemporaries to set forth the national advantages of Captain Eads’ dry canal across Mexico. It is unusual for the daily newspapers to “devote their space” so liberally to the service of a great public interest which antagonizes their own favorite enterprise of a paper canal through Nicaragua. So unanimous and simultaneous a resolve to give the other side a hearing evinces a really good disposition, which might properly be rewarded with free passes over the proposed route before ever a ship is put upon wheels. None but a born criminal steeped to the chin and nose in moral and intellectual depravity would, we suppose, venture to suggest that they have been already rewarded out of the shipway “sack.” In connection with this subject it may be mentioned that Captain Eads’ famous improvements at the mouth of the Mississippi appear now to have been designed as a permanent substitute for the Federal blockade of New Orleans during the war.

The rising generation of Californians appears to be imperfectly gifted with a sense of the worth which distinguishes the generation already risen: the native son of the golden west shows a marked indisposition to avail himself of the advantages which the inspired writer promises to those who honor their fathers and their mothers. Examples in point are never wanting, but last week two were shown which illustrate this solemn truth with exceptional force and lucidity. In one of these instances a young man of this city, returning home early in the morning, found the

parental door locked against him, which, it must be confessed, was irritating. Obtaining admittance through the compassion of his father (who doubtless remembered how it was himself) he at once stabbed this benefactor and chased him into the street without his clothes — “just as God made him,” as the enthusiastic butcher said of the skinned Lamb. The fact that the old man had somewhat impaired the generosity of his action in opening the door by preaching at him after he was inside seems an insufficient justification for the knifing and subsequent pursuit. The other instance of filial infidelity is from Oakland, where a young man whose parents keep an emporium of sundries—what the vulgar call a junk-shop—was arrested in the act of stealing a sack of lead from his father for the wicked purpose of selling it to his mother. In the light of such facts as these it is clear that our peculiar social conditions are developing a type of young manhood essentially different from that which prevails in the effete East: our youths are more free-spirited.

Gladstone: When Ireland has Home Rule I shall be a Grand Older Man.

Geronimo:

Ah Miles is his name,  
And I will not deny,  
In regard to the same,  
What that name might imply.

Salisbury: In dissolving Parliament your Majesty will have the satisfaction of performing a disagreeable duty, to the approval of your Majesty’s Prime Minister.

Victoria: That’s just where the crown pinches.

Cleveland :

Christ from reproach the Magdalen set free,  
And Frankie’s made an honest man of me.

Bismarck: Prospering for three generations under the rule of lunatics, Bavaria hails with delight the reign of an idiot. Could anything more triumphantly demonstrate the value of monarchical government?

Maria Halpin:

Favor how transient! how inconstant glory!  
Lo, even Republicans forget my story !

Senator Hearst: Poor Miller! the longer I am worn by his shoes, the more profoundly I grieve for his death.

Comte de Paris:

What’s “banished” but set free  
From daily contact with the debts I loathe?

Blaine: I don’t seem rightly to understand why Mr. Parnell speaks of me as “the Rev. Burchard Blaine,” when I spoke so well of him and his cause.

Stoneman:

O Tobin, Tobin!  
Had I but served my State with half the zeal  
I served myself it would not in mine age

Have left me naked to my Vroomans.

The fact that Geronimo's political opponents are not tortured when taken nor mutilated when dead is accepted as cheering proof that the women and children of his tribe are not upon the war-trail, but are passing their simple lives amid scenes of peace, far from the corrupting influences of the camp and battle-field; as it is well known that such unmilitary methods are practiced only by combatants of gentle sex and tender years. And herein is meat for the mental tooth of the sentimentalist—whom, in the embracement of it, we wish a hearty appetite and a nimble digestion.

A person named Pulse declared the other day that an angel commanded him to marry an Oakland girl, and he was promptly shut up in a mad-house for blasphemy. He might almost as well have married one.

Ludwig, the late deposed King of Bavaria, signed a royal decree ordering that each of his ministers be deprived of an eye. It is hoped so severe a punishment will not befall them, but if it do we should like to have the eyes. Numbers of young lady admirers are constantly applying to our chief poet for personal souvenirs, and who thinks he might pass these German orbs on them as those which ("in a fine phrensy rolling," generally speaking) adorn his own head. His hair is not sufficiently abundant to meet even the most moderate demand.

In his address to the electors of Midlothian. Mr. Gladstone affirms the importance of the issue which induces him to seek a reelection "at a period of life when nature calls aloud for repose." He is good enough to mean the repose of his enemies—that is what nature means when she "calls aloud" through him. The kind of repose that the Grand Old Man is enamored of is to sit on a stile, contemplating the graves of his political opponents and congratulating himself on the pacification of the country and the goodness of God.

O Reverend Ravlin, once with sounding lung  
You shook the bloody banner of your tongue,  
Urged all the fiery boycotters afield  
And swore you'd rather follow them than yield!  
Alas, how brief the time, how great the change!  
Your dogs of war are ailing all of mangle;  
The loose leash dangles from your finger-tips,  
But the loud "havoc" dies upon your lips.  
No spirit animates your feeble clay—  
You'd rather yield than even run away.  
In vain McGlashan labors to inspire  
Your pallid nostril with his breath of fire:  
The light of battle's faded from your face—  
You keep the peace, John Chinaman his place.  
Ravlin, what cold water, thrown by whom  
Upon the kindling Boycott's ruddy bloom,  
Has slaked your parching blood-thirst and allayed  
The flash and shimmer of your lingual blade?

Your salary—your salary's unpaid!

In the old days, when Christ with scourges drave  
The Ravlins headlong from the Temple's nave,  
Each bore upon his pelt the mark divine—  
The Boycott's red authenticating sign.  
Birth-marked forever in surviving hurts,  
Glowing and smarting underneath their shirts,  
Successive Ravlins have revenged their shame  
By blowing every coal and flinging flame;  
And you, the latest (may you be the last !)  
Endorsed with that hereditary, vast  
And monstrous rubric, would the feud prolong,  
Save that cupidity forbids the wrong.  
In strife you preferably pass your days—  
But brawl no moment longer than it pays.  
When dogs no more your shouting can incite  
To put the panic-stricken sheep to flight  
And load, for you, the brambles with their fleece,  
You cackle concord to congenial geese,  
Put pinches of goodwill upon their tails  
And pluck them with a touch that never fails.

It is rather late for “the party in power” to set up an economical administration of the Government, but it has made a start by reducing the appropriation for the San Francisco Mint from \$285,000, the figure for last year, to \$190,000, which the Superintendent avers is altogether inadequate. We observe, too, that the salary of Judge Hoffman has been denuded of a thousand dollars a year to make it conform to that of the other District Judges—the Democratic way of affirming “the equality of all men before the law.” For the great saving effected by refusing to increase the compensation of Assistant-Treasurer Brooks we have nothing but praise. By stern denial in all similar cases enough can be saved to pay the salaries as they stand.

The acquittal of Dr. McDonald for the killing of Mish effaced the faint hope that circumstances had been found under which the taking of human life would be held by a San Francisco jury to be a reprehensible act. If after the verdict of these twelve dunderheads any man is fool enough to entertain a scruple about “removing” whomsoever he may have become fatigued of seeing about, it must be a merely conscientious one—a moral sentiment, ornamental to the character but of no use and weight in conduct. That this jury was blankly incapable of understanding evidence goes without saying: all juries are. That the controlling factors in the problem it sought to solve were a woman's ever timely tears and the social interests of an unborn babe is as plain as the nose on an elephant's face. We are entirely serious in the suggestion that weeping women and unborn babes be excluded from our courts when not upon the witness stand.

The hostile Apaches appear to be unrestrained by any sentiment of natural justice or sense of military honor. Heretofore our troops have managed to follow them—at some distance—by exchanging their jaded chargers for the somewhat fresher animals discarded by the savages.

These ungenerous foemen have now withdrawn from their pursuers that advantage: when Geronimo remounts his braves on the pampered animals of the luckless rancher he orders all the abandoned ones disabled by ham-stringing. This unfair strategy is said to be displeasing to General Miles, and it is feared that a coldness may ensue between him and his dusky antagonist. There is always space enough between them for a polar winter.

When the labor movement reaches the restaurants it is getting pretty close to our "business and bosoms." One does not object to lightning, in a general way, but one does not like to be struck in the stomach. If this sort of thing is to go on it will supply the gentle pessimist with a singularly cogent argument against civilization; the complexity and interdependence of whose interests enable a handful of waiters to deprive the town of its dinner because their employers sin against light in the matter of gratuities. It is an interesting fact that the coolness occurred in establishments where gratuities are known only through hearsay evidence, but there is no knowing how soon the public welfare may be seriously menaced by the cold wave of menial discontent hitting the comfortable refectories where ourselves refect.

A cow-county contemporary says the *Wasp* is "in mean opposition to the boycott." Our ambitious contemporary has achieved the distinction of telling a falsehood: we are not in opposition to the boycott, as understood by all honorable and intelligent opponents to Chinese labor. We are opposed to Ravlinary McGlashanation.

In a rather notorious local litigation an important allegation of the lady plaintiff affirmed her husband's inability to maintain her. To support this, that man of improvidence testified that he was "a peddler of hand-organs." This is about as ingenious as the answer of the beggar who, protesting his inability to obtain work, was asked his trade. "I am a restorer of Gothic arches injured by lightning," he replied.

#### FACT

A Turf Exchange has been opened to facilitate betting on races.

#### QUERY

When that is permitted why do the police close the faro dens ?

#### ANSWER

They do not.

The Roman Catholic rite of confirmation was performed the other day in the Joliet (111.) penitentiary upon one hundred and seventeen convicts. It is a queer place to go for "contributing members," but if the Church wants Democrats at all it must take them wherever they are to be found.

(Source: Archive.org, <https://archive.org/stream/waspjanjune188616unse#page/n455/mode/1up>)