

The Wasp
March 6, 1886

The Devil's Dictionary

L.

LABOR, *n.* The process by which A acquires property for B.

LACE, *n.* A delicate and costly textile fabric with which the female soul is netted like a fish.

The devil casting a seine of lace
(With precious stones 'twas weighted)
Drew it in to the landing place
And its contents calculated:

All souls of women were in that sack—
A draught miraculous, precious !
But ere he could throw it across his back
They'd all escaped through the meshes.

LACTEAL FLUID, *n.* [*Reportereese,*] Milk.

LADY, *n.* A vulgarian's name for a woman. A Lieutenant-Governor of California and Warden of the State Prison once reported the number of prisoners under his care as "931 males and 27 ladies."

LAND, *n.* A portion of the earth's surface considered as property. The theory that land is property subject to private ownership and control is the foundation of modern society, and is eminently worthy of the superstructure. Carried to its logical conclusion it means that some have the right to prevent others from living; for the right to own implies the right exclusively to occupy, and in fact laws of trespass are enacted wherever property in land is recognized. It follows that if the whole area of *terra firma* is owned by A, B and C, there will be no place for D, E, F and G to be born on, or, being born as trespassers, to exist on.

A life on the ocean wave,
A home on the rolling deep,
For the spark that nature gave
I have there the right to keep.

They give me the cat-o'-nine

Whenever I go ashore.
Then ho! for the flashing brine —
I'm a natural commodore !

LANGUAGE, *n.* The music with which we charm the serpents guarding another's treasure.

LAOCOON, *n.* A famous piece of antique sculpture representing a priest of that name and his two sons in the folds of two enormous serpents. The skill and diligence with which the old man and boys support the serpents and keep them up to their work have been justly regarded as one of the noblest artistic illustrations of the mastery of human intelligence over brute inertia.

LAP, *n.* One of the most important organs of the female system — an admirable provision of nature for the repose and furnishment of infancy, but chiefly useful in rural festivities to support plates of cold chicken and heads of adult males. The male of our species has a rudimentary lap, imperfectly performing an unnecessary function during the mating period, but in no way contributing to the animal's substantial welfare.

LAPIDATE, *v. t.* To rebuke with stones. St. Stephen, for example, was lapidated like a Chinaman.

Lamented St, Steve,
What Christian can grieve
For the way that you came to your death?
For a monument fair
Of memorial stones
Was reared in the air
O'er your honored bones
Ere yet you'd relinquished your breath.
No doubt as your soul exhaled
You were thanked by resolution ;
For the builders' design had failed
Except for *your* execution.

(Source: Archive.org: <https://archive.org/stream/waspjanjune188616unse#page/n12/mode/1up>)