

The Wasp
June 19, 1911

The Devil's Dictionary

LAY-FIGURE, *n.* The number which represents a hen's periodical output of eggs.

LAZINESS, *n.* Repose of manner in one whose low social position does not warrant it.

LEAD, *n.* A heavy blue-gray metal much used in giving stability to light lovers—particularly in those who love not wisely but other men's wives. Lead is also of great service as a counterpoise to an argument of such weight that it turns the scale of debate the wrong way. An interesting fact in the chemistry of international controversy is that at the point of contact of two patriotisms lead is deposited in great quantities—some say by precipitation, but that is to confuse cause and effect, for the precipitation with which one set of patriots withdraws from the contact is caused by the other set's superior deposit of lead.

Hail holy Lead !— of human feuds the great
And universal arbiter; endowed
With penetration to pierce any cloud
Fogging the field of controversial hate,
And with a swift, inevitable, straight,
Searching precision find the unavowed
But vital point. Thy judgment, when allowed
By the surgeon, settles the debate.
O useful metal! — were it not for thee
We'd have each other by the ears alway:
But when we hear thee buzzing like a bee
We, like old Muhlenberg, "care not to stay."
And when the quick have run away like pullets
Jack Satan smelts the dead to make new bullets.

LEAGUE, *n.* A union of two or more parties, factions or associations for promoting some purpose, commonly nefarious.

LEARNING, *n.* The kind of ignorance affected by (and affecting) civilized races, as distinguished from IGNORANCE, the sort of learning incurred by savages. See NONSENSE.

LEATHERHEAD, *n.* Dr. Bartlett, of the *Bulletin*.

LECTURER, *n.* A person who puts his hand in your pocket, his tongue in your ear and his faith in your patience.

LEGACY, *n.* A gift from one who is legging it out of the world, or has one leg in the grave. The question whether, with a due regard to derivation, the disability of a one-legged soldier can properly be called a legacy of the war has been much debated. The editor of the "Query Column" in the *Sunday Call* is of the opinion that it can.

LEGISLATOR, *n.* A person who goes to the capital of his country to increase his own; one who makes laws and money.

LEISURE, *n.* Lucid intervals in a disordered life.

The Judge:

You lazy dog ! all industry you shirk
As 'twere a crime— why don't you go to work?

The Tough Citizen:

I'm always planning to, hut, may it please your
Honor, I do never get the leisure.

LEONINE, *adj.* Unlike a menagerie lion. *Leonine verses* are those in which a word in the middle rhymes with a word at the end, as in this famous passage from Mr. T-m Gr-g-ry:

The electric light invades the dunnest deep of Hades.
Cries Pluto, 'twixt his snores: "O tempora! O mores!"

It should be explained that Mr. Gr-g-ry does not undertake to teach the pronunciation of the Greek and Latin tongues. Leonine verses are so called in honor of a poet named Leo, whom prosodists appear to find a pleasure in believing to have been the first to discover that a rhyming couplet could be run into a single line.

LEPTOCEHALIDANS, *n.* Authors of other dictionaries.

LETHE, *n.* An infernal river whose waters caused those who drank them to forget all they knew; whereas the drinker of Spring Valley forgets nothing but the Third Commandment and the pious precepts of a sainted mother.

LETTUCE, *n.* An herb of the genus *Lactuca*, wherewith God has been graciously pleased to reward the good and punish the wicked. For by his inner light the righteous man has discerned a manner of compounding for it a dressing, to the appetency whereof a multitude of gustible condiments conspire, being reconciled and ameliorated with profusion of oil, the entire comestible making glad the heart of the godly and causing his face to shine. But the person of spiritual unworth is successfully tempted of the Adversary to eat of the lettuce with destitution of

oil, mustard, egg, salt and garlic, and with a rascal bath of vinegar polluted with sugar. Wherefore the person of spiritual unworth suffers an intestinal pang of strange complexity and raises the song. Let it be so to all who partake: may they be fitly afflict and made to squawk it—ourselves meanwhile in peaceful enjoyment of that which the learned and ingenious Carolus Shinn (*Epistlae ad Gulielmum L. Jacosum, vi, 32*) calls *Men's, women's, and children's consica recti*.

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