

The Wasp
January 9, 1886

The Devil's Dictionary

J.

JEWS-HARP, *n.* An unmusical instrument, played by holding it fast with the teeth and trying to brush it away with the finger. So called from the impossibility of a Jew playing it without a new deal in noses.

JOCKEY, *n.* A person whose business it is to ride and throw races.

JOSS-STICKS, *n.* Small sticks burned by the Chinese in their pagan tomfoolery, in imitation of certain sacred rites of our holy religion.

JOVE, *n.* A mythical being whom the Greeks and Romans ridiculously supposed to be the supreme ruler of the universe—unacquainted as they were with our holy religion.

JOY, *n.* An emotion variously excited, but in its highest degree arising from the contemplation of grief in another.

JUDGE, *n.* A person who is always interfering in disputes in which he has no personal interest. An official whose functions, as a great legal luminary recently informed a body of local law students, very closely resemble those of God. The latter, however, is not afraid to punish Chris. Buckley for contempt, and the former has attained no great distinction as the hero of popular oaths.

JURISPRUDENCE, *n.* The kind of prudence that keeps one inside the law.

JURY, *n.* A number of persons appointed by a court to assist the attorneys in preventing law from degenerating into justice.

Against all law and evidence,
The prisoner was acquitted.
The judge exclaimed: "Is common sense
To jurors not permitted?"

The prisoner's counsel rose and bowed:
"Your Honor, why this fury?
By law the judge is not allowed

To sit upon the jury.”

JUSTICE, *n.* A commodity which in a more or less adulterated condition the State sells to the citizen as a reward for his allegiance, taxes and personal service.

JUTE, *n.* A plant grown in India, the fruit of which supplies a nutritious diet to the directors of our State prison.

K.

K is a consonant which we get from the Greeks, but it can be traced away back beyond them to the Cerathians, a small commercial nation inhabiting the peninsula of Smero. In their tongue it was called Klatchj which means “destroyed.” The form of the letter was originally precisely that of our H, but the learned and ingenious Dr. Schnedeker explains that it was altered to its present shape to commemorate the destruction of the great temple of Jarute by an earthquake, circa 730 B. C. This building was famous for the two lofty columns of its portico, one of which was broken in half by the catastrophe, the other remained standing. As the original form of the letter is supposed to have been suggested by these pillars, so, it is thought by the great antiquary, its later was adopted as a simple and natural—not to say touching—means of keeping the calamity ever in the national memory. It is not known if the name of the letter was altered as an additional mnemonic, or if the name was always *Klatch* and the destruction one of nature’s puns. As each theory seems probable enough, we see no objection to believing both—and Dr. Bartlett of the *Bulletin* has, we understand, arrayed himself on that side of the question.

KANGAROO, *n.* An unconventional kind of animal which in shape is farther than any other from being the square of its base. It is assisted in jumping by its tail (which makes very good soup) and when it has happened to alight on the surprised Australian it is usually observable that his skin is unbuttoned from the neck downward and he carries his bowels in his arms.

KEEP, *v. t.*

He willed away his whole estate,
And then in death he fell asleep,
Murmuring: “Well, at any rate,
My name unblemished I shall keep.”
But when ’twas cut upon the marble
Heaven rest his spirit! what a garble!

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