

The Wasp
February 13, 1886

The Devil's Dictionary

K.

KILL, *v. t.* To create a vacancy without nominating an incumbent.

KILT, *n.* A barbaric costume sometimes worn by Scotchmen in England and America, and by Englishmen and Americans in Scotland.

KINDNESSS, *n.* A brief preface to ten volumes of exaction.

KINE, *n.* Cows.

If kine is the plural of cow,
And the plural of sow is swine,
Then pumpkins may hang from a vow,
And coronets rest upon brine.

KING, *n.* A male person commonly known in this country as a "crowned head," though he never wears a crown and has usually no head to speak of.

A king, in times long, long gone by,
Said to his lazy jester:
"If I were you and you were I
My moments merrily would fly—
Nor care nor grief to pester."

"The reason, Sire, that you would thrive,"
The fool said—"if you'll hear it—
Is that of all the fools alive
Who own you for their sovereign, I've
The most forgiving spirit."

KINGS-EVIL, *n.* A malady that was formerly cured by the touch of the sovereign, but has now to be treated by the doctors. Thus, "the most pious Edward," of England, used to lay his royal hand upon his ailing subjects and make them whole—

"a crowd of wretched souls

That stay his cure: their malady convinces
The great essay of art ; but at his touch,
Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand
They presently amend,”

As the "Doctor" in Macbeth had it. This useful property of the royal hand could, it appears, be transmitted, along with other crown properties; for according to "Malcolm,"

'tis spoken,
To the succeeding royalty he leaves
The healing benediction.”

But the gift somewhere dropped out of the line of succession; the later sovereigns of England have not been magnetic healers, and the disease once honored with the name "king's-evil" now bears the humbler one of "scrofula," from *scrofa*, a sow. It has been reduced to the ranks, as it were. The date and author of the following epigram are unknown, but it is old enough to show that the jest about Scotland's national disorder is not a thing of yesterday, nor an invention of Peter Robertson of the *Chronicle*:

Ye Kynge his evill in me laye,
Wh. he of Scottlande charmed awaye.
He layde his hand on mine and sayd:
"Be gone!" Ye ill no longer stayd.
But O ye wofull plyght in wh.
I'm now y-pight: I have ye itche!

The superstition that maladies can be cured by royal taction is dead, but like many a departed conviction it has left a monument of custom to keep its memory given. The practice of forming in line and shaking the President's hand had no other origin; and when "the most pious Grover" the other day treated to his healing benediction some six thousand

"strangely visited people,
All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
The mere despair of surgery,"

He and his patients were handing along an extinguished torch which once was kindled at the altar-fire of a faith long held by all classes of men. It is a beautiful and edifying "survival"—one which brings the sainted past very close home to our "business and bosoms."

KISS, *n.* A word invented by the poets as a rhyme for "bliss." It is supposed to signify, in a general way, some kind of rite or ceremony appertaining to a good understanding; but the manner and purpose of its performance are unknown to the author of this dictionary.

KLEPTOMANIAC, *n.* A disinterested thief.

KNIGHT, *n.*

Once a warrior of gentle birth,
Then a person of civic worth,
Now a fellow to move our mirth.
Warrior, person and fellow — no more :
We must knight our dogs to get any lower.
Brave Knights Kennelers then shall be,
Noble Knights of the Golden Flea,
Knights of the Order of St. Steboy,
Knights of St. George and Knights of Jewry,
Lord speed the day when this “knighting” fad
Shall go to the dogs and the dogs go mad.

KORAN, *n.* A book which the Mohammedans foolishly believe to have been written by divine inspiration, but which Christians (without reading it) know to be a wicked imposture, contradictory to the Holy Scriptures.

KRISHNA, *n.* A form under which the pretended god Vishnu became incarnate. A very likely story indeed.

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