

Bierce Ambrose

The Cynic's Word Book



Ambrose Bierce
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Bierce A.

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PREFACE

With reference to certain actual and possible questions of priority and originality, it may be explained that this Word Book was begun in the San Francisco "Wasp" in the year 1881, and has been continued, in a desultory way, in several journals and periodicals. As it was no part of the author's purpose to define all the words in the language, or even to make a complete alphabetical series, the stopping-place of the book was determined by considerations of bulk. In the event of this volume proving acceptable to that part of the reading public to which in humility it is addressed – enlightened souls who prefer dry wines to sweet, sense to sentiment, good English to slang, and wit to humor – there may possibly be another if the author be spared for the compiling.

A conspicuous, and it is hoped not unpleasing, feature of the book is its abundant illustrative quotations from eminent poets, chief of whom is that learned and ingenious cleric, Father Gassalasca Jape, S. J., whose lines bear his initials. To Father Jape's kindly encouragement and assistance the author of the prose text is greatly indebted.

A. B

Washington, D. C.,
May, 1906

A

ABASEMENT, n. A decent and customary mental attitude in the presence of wealth or power. Peculiarly appropriate in an employé when addressing an employer.

ABATIS, n. Rubbish in front of a fort, to prevent the rubbish outside from molesting the rubbish inside.

ABDICATION, n. An act whereby a sovereign attests his sense of the high temperature of the throne.

Poor Isabella's dead, whose abdication
Set all tongues wagging in the Spanish nation.
For that performance 'twere unfair to scold her:
She wisely left a throne too hot to hold her.
To History she 'll be no royal riddle —
Merely a plain parched pea that jumped the griddle.

ABDOMEN, n. The temple of the god Stomach, in whose worship, with sacrificial rights, all true men engage. From women this ancient faith commands but a stammering assent. They sometimes minister at the altar in a half-hearted and inefficient way, but true reverence for the one deity that men really adore they know not. If woman had a free hand in the world's marketing the race would become graminivorous.

ABILITY, n. The natural equipment to accomplish some small part of the meaner ambitions distinguishing able men from dead ones. In the last analysis ability is commonly found to consist mainly in a high degree of solemnity. Perhaps, however, this impressive quality is rightly appraised; it is no easy task to be solemn.

ABNORMAL, adj. Not conforming to standard. In matters of thought and conduct, to be independent is to be abnormal, to be abnormal is to be detested. Wherefore the lexicographer adviseth a striving toward a straiter resemblance to the Average Man than he hath to himself. Who so attaineth thereto shall have peace, the prospect of death and the hope of Hades.

ABORIGINES, Persons of little worth found cumbering the soil of a newly discovered country. They soon cease to cumber; they fertilize.

ABRACADABRA.

By Abracadabra we signify
An infinite number of things.
'T is the answer to What? and How? and Why?
And Whence? and Whither? – a word whereby
The Truth (with the comfort it brings)
Is open to all who grope in night,

Crying for Wisdom's holy light.
Whether the word is a verb or a noun
Is knowledge beyond my reach.
I only know that't is handed down
From sage to sage,
From age to age —
An immortal part of speech!

Of an ancient man the tale is told
That he lived to be ten centuries old,
In a cave on a mountain side.
(True, he finally died.)
The fame of his wisdom filled the land,
For his head was bald and you 'll understand
His beard was long and white
And his eyes uncommonly bright.

Philosophers gathered from far and near
To sit at his feet and hear and hear,
Though he never was heard
To utter a word
But "Abracadabra, abracadab,
Abracada, abracad,
Abraca, abrac, ahra, ab!"
'T was all he had,
'T was all they wanted to hear, for each
Made copious notes of the mystical speech
Which they published next —
A trickle of text
In a meadow of commentary.
Mighty big books were these,
In number, as leaves of trees;
In learning, remarkable – very!

He 's dead,
As I said,
And the books of the sages have perished,
But his wisdom is sacredly cherished.
In "*Abracadabra*" it solemnly rings,
Like an ancient bell that forever swings.
Oh, I love to hear
That word make clear
Humanity's General Sense of Things.

Jamrach Holobom.

ABRIDGE, v. t. To shorten.

"When in the course of human events it becomes necessary for a people to abridge their king, a decent respect for the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation." – Oliver Cromwell.

ABRUPT, adj. Sudden, without ceremony, like the arrival of a cannonshot and the departure of the soldier whose interests are most affected by it. Dr. Samuel Johnson beautifully said of another author's ideas that they were "concatenated without abruption."

ABSCOND, v. i. To "move" in a mysterious way, commonly with the property of another.

Spring beckons! All things to the call respond;
The trees are leaving and cashiers abscond.

Phela Orm.

ABSENT, adj. Peculiarly exposed to the tooth of detraction; vilified; hopelessly in the wrong; superseded in the consideration and affection of another.

To men a man is but a mind. Who cares
What face he carries or what form he wears?
But woman's body is the woman. Oh,
Stay thou, my sweetheart, and do never go.
But heed the warning words the sage hath said:
A woman absent is a woman dead.

Jogo Tyree.

ABSENTEE, n. A person with an income who has had the forethought to remove himself from the sphere of exaction.

ABSOLUTE, adj. Independent, irresponsible. An absolute monarchy is one in which the sovereign does as he pleases so long as he pleases the assassins. Not many absolute monarchies are left, most of them having been replaced by limited monarchies, where the sovereigns' power for evil (and for good) is greatly curtailed, and by republics, which are governed by chance.

ABSTAINER, n. A weak person who yields to the temptation of denying himself a pleasure. A Total Abstainer is one who abstains from everything, but abstention, and especially from inactivity in the affairs of others.

Said a man to a crapulent youth: "I thought
You a total abstainer, my son."
"So I am, so I am," said the scapegrace caught —
"But not, sir, a bigoted one."

G. J.

ABSURDITY, n. A statement or belief manifestly inconsistent with one's own opinion.

ACADEME, n. An ancient school where morality and philosophy were taught.

ACADEMY, n. [from Academe]. A modern school where football is taught.

ACCIDENT, n. An inevitable occurrence due to the action of immutable natural laws.

ACCOMPLICE, n. One associated with another in a crime, having guilty knowledge and complicity, as an attorney who defends a criminal, knowing him guilty. This view of the attorney's position in the matter has not hitherto commanded the assent of attorneys, no one having offered them a fee for assenting.

ACCORD, n. Harmony.

ACCORDION, n. An instrument in harmony with the sentiments of an assassin.

ACCOUNTABILITY, n. The mother of caution.

"My accountability, bear in mind,"
Said the Grand Vizier: "Yes, yes."

Said the Shah: "I do — 't is the only kind
Of ability you possess."

ACCUSE, v. t. To affirm another's guilt or unworth; most commonly as a justification of ourselves for having wronged him.

ACEPHALOUS, adj. In the surprising condition of the Crusader who absently pulled at his forelock some hours after a Saracen scimitar had, unconsciously to him, passed through his neck, as related by the Prince de Joinville.

ACHIEVEMENT, n. The death of endeavor and the birth of disgust.

ACKNOWLEDGE, v. t. To confess. To acknowledge one another's faults is the highest duty imposed by our love of truth.

Joram Tate.

ACQUAINTANCE, n. A person whom we know well enough to borrow from, but not well enough to lend to. A degree of friendship called slight when its object is poor or obscure, and "intimate" when he is rich or famous.

ACTUALLY, adv. Perhaps; possibly.

ADAGE, n. Boned wisdom for weak teeth.

ADAMANT, n. A mineral frequently found beneath a corset. Soluble in solicitate of gold.

ADDER, n. A species of snake. So called from its habit of adding funeral outlays to the other expenses of living.

ADHERENT, n. A follower who has not yet obtained all that he expects to get.

ADMINISTRATION, n. An ingenious abstraction in politics, designed to receive the kicks and cuffs due to the premier or president. A man of straw, proof against bad-egging and dead-cattling.

ADMIRABILITY, n. My kind of ability, as distinguished from your kind of ability.

ADMIRAL, n. That part of a war-ship which does the talking while the figure-head does the thinking.

ADMIRATION, n. Our polite recognition of another's resemblance to ourselves.

ADMONITION, n. Gentle reproof, as with a meat-axe. Friendly warning.

Consigned, by way of admonition,
His soul forever to perdition.

Judibras.

ADORE, v. t. To venerate expectantly.

ADVICE, n. The smallest current coin.

"The man was in such deep distress,"
Said Tom, "that I could do no less
Than give him good advice." Said Jim:
"If less could have been done for him
I know you well enough, my son,
To know that's what you would have done."

Je bel Jocordy,

AFFIANCED, pp. Fitted with an anklering for the ball-and-chain.

AFFLICTION, n. An acclimatizing process preparing the soul for another and bitter world.

AFRICAN, n. A nigger that votes our way.

AGE, n. That period of life in which we compound for the vices that remain by reviling those that we have no longer the vigor to commit.

AGITATOR, n. A statesman who shakes the fruit trees of his neighbors – to dislodge the worms.

AIM, n. The task we set our wishes to.

"Cheer up! Have you no aim in life?"
She tenderly inquired.
"An aim? Well, no, I have n't, wife;
The fact is – I have fired."

G.F.

AIR, n. That nutritious substance so abundantly supplied by a bountiful Providence for the fattening of the poor.

ALDERMAN, n. An ingenious criminal who covers his secret thieving with a pretence of open marauding.

ALIEN, n. An American sovereign in his probationary state.

ALLAH, n. The Mahometan Supreme Being, as distinguished from the Christian, Jewish, etc.

Allah's good laws I faithfully have kept,
And ever for the sins of man have wept;
And sometimes kneeling in the temple I
Have reverently crossed my hands and slept.

Junker Barlow.

ALLEGIANCE, n.

This thing Allegiance, as I suppose,
Is a ring fitted in the subject's nose,
Whereby that organ is kept rightly pointed
To smell the sweetness of the Lord's anointed.

G.F.

ALLIANCE, n. In international politics, the union of two thieves who have their hands so deeply inserted in each other's pocket that they cannot separately plunder a third.

ALLIGATOR, n. The crocodile of America, superior in every respect to the crocodile of the effete monarchies of the Old World. Herodotus says the Indus is, with one exception, the only river that produces crocodiles, but they appear to have gone West and grown up with the other rivers. From the notches on his back the alligator is called a sawrian.

ALONE, adj. In bad company.

In contact, lo! the flint and steel,
By spark and flame, the thought reveal
That he the metal, she the stone,
Had cherished secretly alone.

Booley Fito.

ALTAR, n. The place whereon the priest formerly ravelled out the small intestine of the sacrificial victim for purposes of divination and cooked its flesh for the gods. The word is now seldom used, except with reference to the sacrifice of their liberty and peace by a male and a female fool.

They stood before the altar and supplied
The fire themselves in which their fat was fried.
In vain the sacrifice! – no god will claim
An offering burnt with an unholy flame.

M. P. Nopput.

AMBIDEXTROUS, adj. Able to pick with equal skill a right-hand pocket or a left.

AMBITION, n. An overmastering desire to be villified by enemies while living and made ridiculous by friends when dead.

AMNESTY, n. The State's magnanimity to those offenders whom it would be too expensive to punish.

ANOINT, v.t. To grease. To consecrate a king or other great functionary already sufficiently slippery.

As sovereigns are anointed by the priesthood,
So pigs to lead the populace are greased good.

Judibras.

ANTIPATHY, n. The sentiment inspired by one's friend's friend.

APHORISM, n. A brief statement, bald in style and flat in sense.

The flabby wine-skin of a brain
That, spilling once and filled again,
Voids from its impotent abysm
The driblet of an aphorism.

"The Mad Philosopher" 1697

APOLOGIZE, v. i. To lay the foundation for a future offence.

APOSTATE, n. A leech who, having penetrated the shell of a turtle only to find the creature has long been dead, deems it expedient to form a new attachment to a fresh turtle.

APOTHECARY, n. The physician's accomplice, undertaker's benefactor and grave worm's provider.

When Jove sent blessings to all men that are,
And Mercury conveyed them in a jar,
That friend of tricksters introduced by stealth
Disease for the apothecary's health,
Whose gratitude impelled him to proclaim:
"My deadliest drug shall bear my patron's name!"

G.F.

APPEAL, v. t. In law, to put the dice into the box for another throw.

APPETITE, n. An instinct thoughtfully implanted by Providence as a solution to the labor question.

APPLAUSE, n. The echo of a platitude.

APRIL FOOL, n. The March fool with another month added to his folly.

ARBITRATION, n. A modern device for promoting strife by substituting for an original dispute a score of inevitable disagreements as to the manner of submitting it for settlement.

ARCHBISHOP, n. An ecclesiastical dignitary one point holier than a bishop.

If I were a jolly archbishop,
On Fridays I 'd eat all the fish up —
Salmon and flounders and smelts;
On other days everything else.

Jodo Rem.

ARCHITECT, n. One who drafts a plan of your house, and plans a draft of your money; who estimates the whole cost, and himself costs the whole estimate.

ARDOR, n. The quality that distinguishes love without knowledge.

ARENA, n. In politics, an imaginary rat-pit, in which the statesman wrestles with his record.

ARISTOCRACY, n. Government by the best men. (In this sense the word is obsolete; so is that kind of government.) Fellows that wear downy hats and clean shirts – guilty of education and suspected of bank accounts.

ARMOR, n. The kind of clothing worn by a man whose tailor is a blacksmith.

ARRAYED, pp. Drawn up and given an orderly disposition, as a rioter hanged to a lamp-post.

ARREST, v. t. Formally to detain one accused of unusualness.

God made the world in six days and was arrested on the seventh. – *The Unauthorized Version*.

ARSENIC, n. A kind of cosmetic greatly affected by the ladies, whom it greatly affects in turn.

"Eat arsenic? Yes, all you get,"
Consenting, he did speak up;
"'T is better you should eat it, pet,
Than put it in my teacup."

Joel Huck.

ART, n. This word has no definition. Its origin is related as follows by the ingenious Father Gassalasca Jape, S. J.

One day a wag – what would the wretch be at? —
Shifted a letter of the cipher RAT,
And said it was a god's name! Straight arose
Fantastic priests and postulants (with shows,
And mysteries, and mummeries, and hymns,
And disputations dire that lamed their limbs)
To serve his temple and maintain the fires,
Expound the law, manipulate the wires.
Amazed, the populace the rites attend,
Believe whate'er they cannot comprehend.

And, inly edified to learn that two
Half-hairs joined so and so (as Art can do)
Have sweeter values and a grace more fit
Than Nature's hairs that never have been split,
Bring cates and wines for sacrificiàl feasts,
And sell their garments to support the priests.

ARTLESSNESS, n. A certain engaging quality to which women attain by long study and severe practice upon the admiring male, who is pleased to fancy it resembles the candid simplicity of his young.

ASPERSE, v. t Maliciously to ascribe to another vicious actions which one has not had the temptation and opportunity to commit.

ASS, n. A public singer with a good voice but no ear. In Virginia City, Nevada, he is called the Washoe Canary, in Dakota, the Senator, and everywhere the Donkey. The animal is widely and variously celebrated in the literature, art, and religion of every age and country; no other so engages and fires the human imagination as this noble vertebrate. Indeed, it is doubted by some (Ramasilus, *lib. II., De Clem.*, and C. Stantatus, *De Temperamente*) if it is not a god; and as such we know it was worshipped by the Etruscans, and, if we may believe Macrobius, by the Capasians also. Of the only two animals admitted into the Mahometan Paradise along with the souls of men, the ass that carried Balaam is one, the dog of the Seven Sleepers the other. This is no small distinction. From what has been written about this beast might be compiled a library of great splendor and magnitude, rivaling that of the Shakspearean cult, and that which clusters about the Bible. It may be said, generally, that all literature is more or less Asinine.

"Hail, holy Ass!" the quiring angels sing;
"Priest of Unreason, and of Discords King!
Great co-Creator, let Thy glory shine:
God made all else, the Mule – the Mule is thine!"

G.F.

AUCTIONEER, n. The man who proclaims with a hammer that he has picked a pocket with his tongue.

AUSTRALIA, n. A country lying in the South Sea, whose industrial and commercial development has been unspeakably retarded by an unfortunate dispute among geographers as to whether it is a continent or an island.

AVERNUS, n. The lake by which the ancients entered the infernal regions. The fact that access to the infernal regions was obtained by a lake is believed by the learned Marcus Ansello Scrutator to have suggested the Christian rite of baptism by immersion. This, however, has been shown by Lactantius to be an error.

Facilis descensus Avertit,
The poet remarks; and the sense
Of it is that when down hill I turn I
Will get more of punches than pence.

Jehal Dai Lupe.

AVERSION, n. The feeling that one has for the plate after he has eaten its contents, madam.

B

BAAL, n. A deity formerly much worshipped under various names. As Baal he was popular with the Phoenicians; as Belus or Bel he had the honor to be served by the priest Berosus, who wrote the famous account of the Deluge; as Babel he had a tower partly erected to his glory on the Plain of Shinar. From Babel comes our English word "babble." Under whatever name worshipped, Baal is the Sun-god. As Beelzebub he is the god of flies, which are begotten of the sun's rays on stagnant water. In Physicia Baal is still worshipped as Bolus, and as Belly he is adored and served with abundant sacrifice by the priests of Guttle and Swig.

BABB, or **BABY**, n. A misshapen creature of no particular age, sex, or condition, chiefly remarkable for the violence of the sympathies and antipathies it excites in others, itself without sentiment or emotion. There have been famous babes; for example, little Moses, from whose adventure in the bulrushes the Egyptian hierophants of seven centuries before doubtless derived their idle tale of the child Osiris being preserved on a floating lotus leaf.

Ere babes were invented
The girls were contented.
Now man is tormented
Until to buy babes he has squandered
His money. And so I have pondered
This thing, and thought may be
'T were better that Baby
The First had been eagled or condored.

Ro Amil.

BACCHUS, w. A convenient deity invented by the ancients as an excuse for getting drunk.

Is public worship, then, a sin,
That for devotions paid to Bacchus
The lictors dare to run us in,
And resolutely thump and whack us?

Horace.

BACK, n. That part of your friend which it is your privilege to contemplate in your adversity.

BACKBITE, v. t. To "speak of a man as you find him" when he can't find you.

BAIT, n. A preparation that renders the hook more palatable. The best kind is beauty.

BAPTISM, n. A sacred rite of such efficacy that he who finds himself in heaven without having undergone it will be unhappy forever. It is performed with water in two ways – by immersion, or plunging, and by aspersion, or sprinkling.

But whether the plan of immersion
Is better than simple aspersion
Let those immersed
And those aspersed
Decide by the Authorized Version,
And by matching their agues tertian.

G. F.

BAROMETER, n. An ingenious instrument which indicates what kind of weather we are having.

BARRACK, n. A house in which soldiers enjoy a portion of that of which it is their business to deprive others.

BASILISK, n. The cockatrice. A sort of serpent hatched from the egg of a cock. The basilisk had a bad eye, and its glance was fatal. Many infidels deny this creature's existence, but Semprello Aurator saw and handled one that had been blinded by lightning as a punishment for having fatally gazed on a lady of rank whom Jupiter loved. Juno afterward restored the reptile's sight and hid it in a cave. Nothing is so well attested by the ancients as the existence of the basilisk, but the cocks have stopped laying eggs.

BASTINADO, n. The act of walking on wood without exertion.

BATH, n. A kind of mystic ceremony substituted for religious worship, with what spiritual efficacy has not been determined.

The man who taketh a steam bath
He loseth all the skin he hath,
And, for he 's boiled a brilliant red,
Thinketh to cleanliness he's wed,
Forgetting that his lungs he's soiling
With dirty vapors of the boiling.

Richard Gwow.

BATTLE, n. A method of untying with the teeth a political knot that would not yield to the tongue.

BEARD, n. The hair that is commonly cut off by those who justly execrate the absurd Chinese custom of shaving the head.

BEAUTY, n. The power by which a woman charms a lover and terrifies a husband.

BEFRIEND, v. t. To make an ingrate.

BEG, v. To ask for something with an earnestness proportioned to the belief that it will not be given.

Who is that, father?
A mendicant, child,
Haggard, morose, and unaffable – wild!
See how he glares through the bars of his cell!
With Citizen Mendicant all is not well.

Why did they put him there, father?
Because
Obeying his belly he struck at the laws.
His belly?

Oh, well, he was starving, my boy —
A state in which, doubtless, there 's little of joy.
No bite had he eaten for days, and his cry

Was "Bread!" ever "Bread!"

What 's the matter with pie?
With little to wear, he had nothing to sell;
To beg was unlawful – improper as well.

Why did n't he work?
He would even have done that,
But men said: "Get out!" and the State re marked: "Scat!"
I mention these incidents merely to show
That the vengeance he took was uncommonly low.
Revenge, at the best, is the act of a Siou,
But for trifles —

Pray what did bad Mendicant do?
Stole two loaves of bread to replenish his lack
And tuck out the belly that clung to his back.
Is that *all* father dear?

There is little to tell:

They sent him to jail, and they'll send him to —
well,
The company's better than here we can boast,
And there's —
Bread for the needy, dear father?
Um – toast.

Atka Mip

BEGGAR, n. One who has relied on the assistance of his friends.

BEHAVIOR, n. Conduct, as determined, not by principle, but by breeding. The word seems to be somewhat loosely used in Dr. Jamrach Holobom's translation of the following lines in the *Dies Iræ*:

Recordare, Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuæ viæ
Ne me perdas illa die.

Pray remember, sacred Savior,
Whose the thoughtless hand that gave your
Death-blow. Pardon such behavior.

BELLADONNA, n. In Italian a beautiful lady; in English a deadly poison. A striking example of the essential identity of the two tongues.

BENEDICTINES, n. An order of monks, otherwise known as black friars.

He thought it a crow, but it turned out to be
A monk of St. Benedict croaking a text.
"Here 's one of an order of cooks," said he —

"Black friars in this world, fried black in the next."

"The Devil on Earth" (London, 1712).

BENEFACTOR, n. One who makes heavy purchases of ingratitude, without, however, materially affecting the price, which is still within the means of all.

BERENICE'S HAIR, n. A constellation (Coma Berenices) named in honor of one who sacrificed her hair to save her husband.

Her locks an ancient lady gave
Her loving husband's life to save;
And men – they honored so the dame —
Upon some stars bestowed her name.

But to our modern married fair,
Who 'd give their lords to save their hair,
No stellar recognition 's given.
There are not stars enough in heaven.

G. F.

BIGAMY, n. A mistake in taste for which the wisdom of the future will adjudge a punishment called trigamy.

BIGOT, n. One who is obstinately and zealously attached to an opinion that you do not entertain.

BILLINGSGATE, n. The invective of an opponent.

BIRTH, n. The first and direst of disasters. As to the nature of it there appears to be no uniformity. Castor and Pollux were born from the egg. Pallas came out of a skull. Galatea was once a block of stone. Peresilis, who wrote in the tenth century, avers that he grew up out of the ground where a priest had spilled holy water. It is known that Arimaxus was derived from a hole in the earth, made by a stroke of lightning. Leucomedon was the son of a cavern in Mount Ætna, and I have myself seen a man come out of a wine cellar.

BLACKGUARD, n. A man whose qualities, prepared for the display like a box of berries in a market – the fine ones on top – have been opened on the wrong side. An inverted gentleman.

BLANK-VERSE, n. Unrhymed iambic pentameters – the most difficult kind of English verse to write acceptably; a kind, therefore, much affected by those who cannot acceptably write any kind.

BODY-SNATCHER, n. A robber of grave-worms. One who supplies the young physicians with that with which the old physicians have supplied the undertaker. The hyena.

"One night," a doctor said, "last fall,
I and my comrades, four in all,
When visiting a grave-yard stood
Within the shadow of a wall.

While waiting for the moon to sink
We saw a wild hyena slink
About a new-made grave, and then
Begin to excavate its brink!

Shocked by the horrid act, we made
A sally from our ambushade,
And, falling on the unholy beast,
Dispatched him with a pick and spade."

Bettel K. Jhones.

BONDSMAN, n. A fool who, having property of his own, undertakes to become responsible for that entrusted to another.

Philippe of Orleans wishing to appoint one of his favorites, a dissolute nobleman, to a high office, asked him what security he would be able to give. "I need no bondsmen," he replied, "for I can give you my word of honor." "And pray what may be the value of that?" inquired the amused Regent.

"Monsieur, it is worth its weight in gold."

BORE, n. A person who talks when you wish him to listen.

BOTANY, n. The science of vegetables – those that are not good to eat, as well as those that are. It deals largely with their flowers, which are commonly badly designed, inartistic in color, and ill-smelling.

BOTTLE-NOSED, adj. Having a nose created in the image of its maker.

BOUNDARY, n. In political geography, an imaginary line between two nations, separating the imaginary rights of one from the imaginary rights of the other.

BOUNTY, n. The liberality of one who has all things, in permitting one who has nothing to get all he can.

"A single swallow, it is said, devours ten millions of insects every year. The supplying of these insects I take to be a signal instance of the Creator's bounty in providing for the lives of His creature."

Henry Ward Beecher.

BRAHMA, n. He who created the Hindoos, who are preserved by Vishnu and destroyed by Siva – a rather neater division of labor than is found among the deities of some other nations. The Abracadabranese, for example, are created by Sin, maintained by Theft and destroyed by Folly. The priests of Brahma, like those of the Abracadabranese, are holy and learned men who are never naughty.

O Brahma, thou rare old Divinity,
First Person of the Hindoo Trinity,
You sit there so calm and securely,
With feet folded up so demurely —
You're the First Person Singular, surely.

Polydore Smith.

BRAIN, n. An apparatus with which we think that we think. That which distinguishes the man who is content to *be* something from the man who wishes to *do* something. A man of great wealth, or one who has been pitchforked into high station, has commonly such a headful of brain that his neighbors cannot keep their hats on. In our civilization, and under our republican form of government, brain is so highly honored that it is rewarded by exemption from the cares of office.

BRANDY, n. A cordial composed of one part thunder-and-lightning, one part remorse, two parts bloody murder, one part death-hell-and-thegrave and four parts clarified Satan. Dose, a headful all the time. Brandy is said, by Carlyle, I think, to be the drink of heroes. Only a hero will venture to drink it.

BRIDE, n. A woman with a fine prospect of happiness behind her.

BRUTE, n. See HUSBAND.

C

CAABA, n. A large stone presented by the archangel Gabriel to the patriarch Abraham, and preserved at Mecca. The patriarch had perhaps asked the archangel for bread.

CABBAGE, n. A familiar kitchen-garden vegetable about as large and wise as a man's head.

The cabbage is so called from Cabagius, a prince who on ascending the throne issued a decree appointing a High Council of Empire, consisting of the members of his predecessor's Ministry and the cabbages in the royal garden. When any of His Majesty's measures of state policy miscarried conspicuously it was gravely announced that several members of the High Council had been beheaded, and his murmuring subjects were appeased.

CAKLE, v. i. To celebrate the birth of an egg.

They say that hens do cackle loudest when
There's nothing vital in the egg they 've laid;
And there are hens, professing to have made
A study of mankind, who say that men
Whose business is to drive the tongue or pen
Make the most clamorous fanfaronade
O'er their most worthless work, and I 'm afraid
In this respect they 're really like the hen.

Lo! the drum-major in his coat of gold,
His blazing breeches and high-towering cap,
Imperiously pompous, "bloody, bold
And resolute" – an awe-inspiring chap!

Who'd think this gorgeous hero's only virtue
Is that in battle he will never hurt you?

G.J.

CALAMITY, n. A more than commonly plain and unmistakable reminder that the affairs of this life are not of our own ordering. Calamities are of two kinds: misfortune to ourselves, and good fortune to others.

CALLOUS, adj. Gifted with great fortitude to bear the evils afflicting another.

When Zeno was told that one of his enemies was no more he was observed to be deeply moved. "What!" said one of his disciples, "you weep at the death of an enemy?" "Ah, 't is true," replied the great Stoic; "but you should see me smile at the death of a friend."

CALUMNUS, n. A graduate of the School for Scandal.

CAMEL, n. A quadruped (the *Splaypes humpidorsus*) of great value to the show business. There are two kinds of camels – the camel proper and the camel improper. It is the latter that is always exhibited.

CANNIBAL, n. A gastronome of the old school who preserves the simple tastes and adheres to the natural diet of the pre-pork period.

The practice of cannibalism was once universal, as the smallest knowledge of philology will serve to show. "Oblige us," says the erudite author of the *Delectatio Demonorum*, "by considering the derivation of the word 'sarcophagus,' and see if it be not suggestive of potted meats. Observe the significance of the phrase 'sweet sixteen.' What a world of meaning lurks in the expression 'she's

as sweet as a peach,' and how suggestive of luncheon are the words 'tender youth!' A kiss is but a modified bite, and a fond mother, when she rapturously avers that her babe is 'almost good enough to eat,' merely shows that she is herself only a trifle too good to eat it."

CANNON, n. An instrument employed in the rectification of national boundaries.

CANONICALS, n. The motley worn by Jesters at the Court of Heaven.

CAPITAL, n. The seat of misgovernment. That which provides the fire, the pot, the dinner, the table and the knife and fork for the anarchist. The part of the repast that himself supplies is the disgrace before meat. *Capital punishment*, a penalty regarding the justice and expediency of which many worthy persons – including all the assassins – entertain grave misgivings.

CARMELITE, n. A mendicant friar of the order of Mt. Carmel.

As Death was a-riding out one day,
Across Mount Carmel he took his way,
Where he met a mendicant monk,
Some three or four quarters drunk,
With a holy leer and a pious grin,
Ragged and fat and as saucy as sin,
Who held out his hands and cried:
"Give, give in Charity's name, I pray.
Give in the name of the Church. O give,
Give that her holy sons may live!"
And Death replied,
Smiling long and wide:
"I'll give, holy father, I'll give thee —
a ride."

With a rattle and bang
Of his bones, he sprang
From his famous Pale Horse, with his spear;
By the neck and the foot
Seized the fellow, and put
Him astride with his face to the rear.

The Monarch laughed loud with a sound that fell
Like clods on the coffin's empty shell:
"Ho, ho! A beggar on horseback, they say,
Will ride to the devil!" – and thump
Fell the flat of his dart on the rump
Of the charger, which galloped away.

Faster and faster and faster it flew,
Till the rocks, and the flocks, and the trees that
grew
By the road, were dim, and blended, and blue
To the wild, wide eyes
Of the rider – in size
Resembling a couple of blackberry pies.
Death laughed again, as a tomb might laugh
At a burial service spoiled,

And the mourners' intentions foiled
By the body erecting
Its head and objecting
To further proceedings in its behalf.

Many a year and many a day
Have passed since these events away.
The monk has long been a dusty corse,
And Death has never recovered his horse.

For the friar got hold of its tail,
And steered it within the pale
Of the monastery gray,
Where the beast was stabled and fed,
With barley, and oil, and bread,
Till fatter it grew than the fattest friar,
And so in due course was appointed Prior.

G.J.

CARNIVOROUS, adj. Addicted to the cruelty of devouring the timorous vegetarian, his heirs and assigns.

CARTESIAN, adj. Relating to Descartes, a famous philosopher, author of the celebrated dictum, *Cogito, ergo sum*— whereby he was pleased to suppose he demonstrated the reality of human existence. The dictum might be improved, however, thus: *Cogito cogito, ergo cogito sum*— "I think that I think, therefore I think that I am;" as close an approach to certainty as any philosopher has yet made.

CAT, n. A soft, indestructible automaton provided by nature to be kicked when things go wrong in the domestic circle.

This is a dog,
This is a cat,
This is a frog,
This is a rat.
Run, dog, mew, cat,
Jump, frog, gnaw, rat.

Elevenson.

CAVILER, n. A critic of one's own work.

CEMETERY, n. An isolated suburban spot where mourners match lies, poets write at a target and stonecutters spell for a wager. The inscriptions following will serve to illustrate the success attained in these Olympian games:

"His virtues were so conspicuous that his enemies, unable to overlook them, denied them, and his friends, to whose loose lives they were a rebuke, represented them as vices. They are here commemorated by his family, who shared them."

"In the earth we here prepare a
Place to lay our little Clara.
— Thomas M. and Mary Frazer.

P. S. – Gabriel will raise her."

CENTAUR, n. One of a race of persons who lived before the division of labor had been carried to such a pitch of differentiation, and who followed the primitive economic maxim, "Every man his own horse." The best of the lot was Chiron, who to the wisdom and virtues of the horse added the fleetness of man. The scripture story of the head of John the Baptist on a charger shows that pagan myths have somewhat sophisticated sacred history.

CERBERUS, n. The watch-dog of Hades, whose duty it was to guard the entrance – against whom or what does not clearly appear. Everybody, sooner or later, had to go there, and nobody wanted to carry off the entrance. Cerberus is known to have had three heads, and some of the poets have credited him with as many as a hundred. Professor Graybill, whose clerkly erudition and profound knowledge of Greek give his opinion great weight, has averaged all the estimates, and makes the number twenty-seven – a judgment that would be entirely conclusive if Professor Graybill had known (a) something about dogs, and (b) something about arithmetic.

CHILDHOOD, n. The period of human life intermediate between the idiocy of infancy and the folly of youth – two removes from the sin of manhood and three from the remorse of age.

CHRISTIAN, n. One who believes that the New Testament is a divinely inspired book admirably suited to the spiritual needs of his neighbor. One who follows the teachings of Christ in so far as they are not inconsistent with a life of sin.

I dreamed I stood upon a hill, and, lo!
The godly multitudes walked to and fro
Beneath, in Sabbath garments fitly clad,
With pious mien, appropriately sad,
While all the church bells made a solemn din
A fire-alarm to those who lived in sin.
Then saw I gazing thoughtfully below,
With tranquil face, upon that holy show
A tall, spare figure in a robe of white,
Whose eyes diffused a melancholy light.
"God keep you, stranger," I exclaimed. "You are
No doubt (your habit shows it) from afar;
And yet I entertain the hope that you,
Like these good people, are a Christian too."
He raised his eyes and with a look so stern
It made me with a thousand blushes burn
Replied – his manner with disdain was spiced:
"What! I a Christian? No, indeed! I 'm Christ."

G.J.

CIRCUS, n. A place where horses, ponies, and elephants are permitted to see men, women, and children acting the fool.

CLAIRVOYANT, n. A person, commonly a woman, who has the power of seeing that which is invisible to her patron – namely, that he is a blockhead.

CLARIONET, n. An instrument of torture operated by a person with cotton in his ears. There are two instruments that are worse than a clarionet – two clarionets.

CLERGYMAN, n. A man who undertakes the management of our spiritual affairs as a method of bettering his temporal ones.

CLIO, n. One of the nine Muses. Clio's function was to preside over history – which she did with great dignity, many of the prominent citizens of Athens occupying seats on the platform, the meetings being addressed by Messrs. Xenophon, Herodotus and other popular speakers.

CLOCK, n. A machine of great moral value to man, allaying his concern for the future by reminding him what a lot of time remains to him.

A busy man complained one day:
"I get no time!" "What 's that you say?"
Cried out his friend, a lazy quiz;
"You have, sir, all the time there is.
There 's plenty, too, and don't you doubt it —
We 're never for an hour without it."

Purzil Crofe.

CLOSE-FISTED, adj. Unduly desirous of keeping that which many deserving persons wish to obtain.

"Close-fisted Scotchman!" Johnson cried
To thrifty J. Macpherson;
"See me – I 'm ready to divide
With any worthy person."
Said Jamie: "That is very true —
The boast requires no backing;
And all are worthy, sir, to you,
Who have what you are lacking."

Anita M. Bobe.

CONOBITE, or CENOBITE, n. A man who piously shuts himself up to meditate upon the sin of wickedness; and to keep it fresh in his mind joins a brotherhood of awful examples.

O coenobite, O coenobite,
Monastical gregarian,
You differ from the anchorite,
That solitudinarian:
With vollied prayers you wound Old Nick;
With dropping shots he makes him sick.

Quincy Giles.

COMFORT, n. A state of mind produced by the contemplation of our neighbor's uneasiness.

COMMENDATION, n. The tribute that we pay to achievements that resemble, but do not equal, our own.

COMMERCE, n. A kind of transaction in which A plunders from B the goods of C, and for compensation B picks the pocket of D of money belonging to E.

COMMONWEALTH, n. An administrative entity operated by an incalculable multitude of political parasites, logically active, but fortuitously efficient.

This commonwealth's capitol's corridors view,
So thronged with a hungry and indolent crew
Of clerks, pages, porters and all attachés
Whom rascals appoint and the populace pays
That a cat cannot slip through the thicket of shins
Nor hear its own shriek for the noise of their
chins.

On clerks and on pages, and porters, and all,
Misfortune attend and disaster befall!
May life be to them a succession of hurts;
May fleas by the bushel inhabit their shirts;
May aches and diseases encamp in their bones,
Their lungs full of tubercles, bladders of stones;
May microbes, bacilli, their tissues infest,
And tapeworms securely their bowels digest;
May corn-cobs be snared without hope in their hair,
And frequent impalement their pleasure impair.
Disturbed be their dreams by the awful discourse
Of menacing dressers, sepulchrally hoarse,
By chairs acrobatic and wavering floors —
The mattress that kicks and the pillow that snores!
Sons of cupidity, cradled in sin!
Their criminal ranks may the death angel thin,
Avenging the friend whom I could n't work in.

K. Q.

COMPROMISE, n. Such an adjustment of conflicting interests as gives each adversary the satisfaction of thinking he has got what he ought not to have, and is deprived of nothing except what was justly his due.

COMPULSION, n. The eloquence of power.

CONDOLE, v. i. To show that bereavement is a smaller evil than sympathy.

CONFIDANT, CONFIDANTE, n. One entrusted by A with the secrets of B confided to himself by C.

CONGRATULATION, n. The civility of envy.

CONGRESS, n. A body of men who meet to repeal laws.

CONNOISSEUR, n. A specialist who knows everything about something and nothing about anything else.

An old wine-bibber having been smashed in a railway collision, some wine was poured upon his lips to revive him. "Pauillac, 1873," he murmured and died.

CONSERVATIVE, n. A statesman who is enamored of existing evils, as distinguished from the Liberal, who wishes to replace them with others.

CONSOLATION, n. The knowledge that a better man is more unfortunate than yourself.

CONSUL, n. In American politics, a person who having failed to secure an office from the people is given one by the Administration on condition that he leave the country.

CONSULT, v. t. To seek another's approval to a course already decided on.

CONTEMPT, n. The feeling of a prudent man for an enemy who is too formidable safely to be opposed.

CONTROVERSY, n. A battle in which spittle or ink replaces the injurious cannon-ball and the inconsiderate bayonet.

In controversy with the facile tongue —
That bloodless warfare of the old and young —
So seek your adversary to engage
That on himself he shall exhaust his rage,
And, like a snake that's fastened to the ground,
With his own fangs inflict the fatal wound.
You ask me how this miracle is done?
Adopt his own opinions, one by one,
And taunt him to refute them; in his wrath
He 'll sweep them pitilessly from his path.
Advance then gently all you wish to prove,
Each proposition prefaced with, "As you 've
So well remarked," or, "As you wisely say,
And I cannot dispute," or, "By the way,
This view of it which, better far expressed,
Runs through your argument." Then leave
the rest
To him, secure that he 'll perform his trust
And prove your views intelligent and just.

Conmore Apel Brune.

CONVENT, n. A place of retirement for women who wish for leisure to meditate upon the sin of idleness.

CONVERSATION, n. A fair for the display of the minor mental commodities, each exhibitor being too intent upon the arrangement of his own wares to observe those of his neighbor.

CORONATION, n. The ceremony of investing a sovereign with the outward and visible signs of his divine right to be blown skyhigh with a dynamite bomb.

CORPORAL, n. A man who occupies the lowest rung of the military ladder.

Fiercely the battle raged and, sad to tell,
Our corporal heroically fell!
Fame from her height looked down upon the brawl
And said: "He had n't very far to fall."

Giacomo Smith.

CORPORATION, n. An ingenious device for securing individual profit without individual responsibility.

CORSAIR, n. A politician of the seas.

COURT FOOL, n. The plaintiff.

COWARD, n. One who in a perilous emergency thinks with his legs.

CRAFT, n. A fool's substitute for brains.

CRAYFISH, n. A small crustacean very much resembling the lobster, but less indigestible.

In this small fish I take it that human wisdom is admirably figured and symbolized; for whereas the crayfish doth move only backward, and can have only retrospection, seeing naught but the perils

already passed, so the wisdom of man doth not enable him to avoid the follies that beset his course, but only to apprehend their nature afterward. – *Sir James Merivale*.

CREDITOR, n. One of a tribe of savages dwelling beyond the Financial Straits and dreaded for their desolating incursions.

CREMONA, n. A high-priced violin made in Connecticut.

CRITIC, n. A person who boasts himself hard to please because nobody has ever tried to please him.

There is a land of pure delight,
Beyond the Jordan's flood,
Where saints, apparelled all in white,
Fling back the critic's mud.

And as he legs it through the skies,
His pelt a sable hue,
He sorrows sore to recognize
The missiles that he threw.

G. J.

CROSS, n. An ancient religious symbol erroneously supposed to owe its significance to the most solemn event in the history of Christianity, but really antedating it by thousands of years. By many it has been believed to be identical with the *crux ansata* of the ancient phallic worship, but it has been traced even beyond all that we know of that, to the rites of primitive peoples. We have today the White Cross as a symbol of chastity, and the Red Cross as a badge of benevolent neutrality in war. Having in mind the former, the reverend Father Gassalasca Jape smites the lyre to the effect following:

"Be good, be good!" the sisterhood
Cry out in holy chorus;
And, to dissuade from sin, parade
Their various charms before us.

But why, O why, has ne'er an eye
Seen her of winsome manner
And youthful grace and pretty face
Flaunting the White Cross banner?

Now where's the need of speech and screed
To better our behaving?
A simpler plan for saving man
(But, first, is he worth saving?)

Is, dears, when he declines to flee
From bad thoughts that beset him,
Ignores the Law as't were a straw,
And wants to sin – don't let him.

CUI BQNO? [Latin] What good would that do *me*?

CUNNING, n. The faculty that distinguishes a weak animal or person from a strong one. It brings its possessor much mental satisfaction and great material adversity. An Italian proverb says: "The furrier gets the skins of more foxes than asses."

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