

A Dictionary for the Motion Pictures

A Convenient Lexicon for Those Who Like the Cinema—and for Those Who Don't

Compiled and Edited By WILLARD HUNTINGTON WRIGHT

ABANDONED, *n.* Profligate; wicked; immoral. An abandoned woman is one who attends cabaret parties at which confetti are thrown.

ABATTOIR, *n.* A slaughter-house; a scenario department during the process of adapting a classic for the screen.

ABED, *adv.* Where women of more or less questionable character have breakfast.

ADAPT, *v.t.* To make suitable for; as, to adapt a novel for the screen. Synonyms: alter; massacre; distort. (See, abattoir.)

ADVENTURESS, *n.* Any woman who smokes cigarettes, and receives callers in a peignoir.

ALIKE, *adj.* Similar; the same; in no way different: such as the relationship of one motion picture to another.

ALIVE, *adj.* The condition of a leading man who has been shot or has met with an accident which would have instantly killed any other human being.

ALWAYS, *adv.* Designating with what degree of frequency virtue triumphs over vice.

AMAZEMENT, *n.* The mental state of a husband when, a week before he is to become a father, he learns of the fact through accidentally discovering his wife knitting an infant's garment.

AMBASSADOR, *n.* A gentleman with false eyebrows, parted whiskers, and grey patches over his ears; who wears a broad strip of ribbon diagonally athwart the bosom of his evening shirt.

ARROGANCE, *n.* The distinguishing characteristic of the social aristocrats in a screen drama, and of screen actors in the presence of social aristocrats.

ASH, *n.* That which is flicked from the end of a cigarette, by an actor's little finger, to register indifference and nonchalance.

APRON, *n.* An article of attire worn at all times and on all occasions by the benevolent, nonagenarian mothers of poor men in the early twenties.

ARCHED, *adj.* The permanent condition of the average actor's eyebrows.

ASSAULT, *n.* That which is made upon the heroine's person and the spectator's intelligence.

BABY, *n.* The young of the human species, which arrives upon earth by some fabulous and mysterious process in which the husband of the mother apparently does not participate. The average baby

at birth is in the neighborhood of two and a half feet long, and weighs approximately thirty pounds.

BACCHANALIA, *n.* A drunken revel; any party at which a girl dances on the table.

BACHELOR, *n.* An unmarried man of loose habits, who waxes his moustache and has a Japanese valet. All bachelors are professional, but unsuccessful, Don Juans.

BACK, *adv.* Where the pure and innocent young country lass always comes after having eluded the base deceiver from the city, with whom she foolishly eloped.

BALL, *n.* The chief nocturnal diversion of the Four Hundred. A large gathering of people in fancy costumes, disporting themselves in a four-acre hippodrome.

BARE, *adj.* The state of society women's shoulders and country maidens' feet.

BLINDNESS, *n.* An affliction which, unlike deafness, dumbness, insanity, or the loss of limbs, carries with it the compensation of rendering the victim incapable of witnessing screen dramas.

BLONDE, *n.* An immaculate maiden; a pure girl; a virgin. (Antonym: brunette.)

BLURRED, *adj.* A synonym for artistic when applied to photography.

BOTTLE, *n.* A glass receptacle used as a candle-stick by misers and indigent artists.

BRINK, *n.* That particular section of disaster on which all pure young ladies constantly hover until rescued by the noble young leading man.

BRUNETTE, *n.* A loose lady; a vampire; a hussy. (Antonym: Blonde.)

CAFE, *n.* A den of iniquity which only loose livers patronize, and which no one ever enters except in full evening dress.

CARNIVAL, *n.* A public fete or celebration which, in foreign countries, is held regularly every night.

CHAIR, *n.* An article of furniture upon which no ingénue or juvenile "lead" will sit, so long as there is an edge of a table available.

CHEESE, *n.* An article the presence of which is invariably indicated by a bit of pantomime consisting of grasping the nose quickly between the thumb and forefinger.

CHEVAL-GLASS, *n.* A full-length mirror which actors enacting dual personalities viciously smash after looking at themselves there in. As a rule,

the audience participates vicariously in this act, since it expresses their own feelings in regard to the actor.

CHOKER, *v.i.* That which an innocent young lady invariably pretends to do when tasting a cocktail for the first time; and that which the audience hopes she will actually do when they see her thus pretending.

CLIFF, *n.* One of the cinema's most prolific means of ridding a congealed plot of characters who have served their purpose.

CONFESSION, *n.* An acknowledgment of crime, immediately followed by death.

CONTINUITY, *n.* An ironic misnomer applied to the pictorial construction of a film story.

CONVERSATION, *n.* That which, with the advent of the silent drama, has been transferred from the stage to the audience.

CONVICT, *n.* An innocent and upright young man falsely sentenced for a crime he did not commit.

CREASE, *n.* A crease is the same as a wrinkle, and yet a leading man would probably commit suicide rather than appear in a pair of trousers which did not contain the former or which did contain the latter.

CURL, *n.* A cylinder of blonde hair, worn by young ladies as an emblem of biological integrity.

DAGGER, *n.* A weapon which, in the hand of a frail and inexperienced maiden, incapable of dealing instant death to the most powerful desperado.

DEBAUCH, *n.* Any party at which the ladies are permitted to smoke.

DECLIVITY, *n.* A more or less steep in cline which cowboys on horseback invariably choose in preference to the level road.

DECOLLETE, *adj.* A style of gown worn exclusively by the *beau monde* and De Mille heroines.

DESK, *n.* An article of furniture in which a wife keeps incriminating love letters and documents concerning her past.

DETECTIVE, *n.* A person whose powers of detection lie in the fact that he never takes his hat off in the house.

DIARY, *n.* A book in which a person writes down in detail some compromising secret concerning himself, and which he then places where it is most likely to be discovered by the person whom he least wishes to become privy to the secret.

DIRECTOR, *n.* A gentleman whose principal equipment consists of a megaphone, put tees, riding breeches, a sport shirt, a cavalry



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man's wrist-watch, and a bottle of brillianine. **DISGUISE**, *n.* A slight alteration in a person's appearance which is immediately penetrated by every member of the audience, including the children, but which completely deceives his most intimate friends and relatives.

DISHONESTY, *n.* A quality which characterizes any person with a moustache, Burnsidies, Van Dyke, Dundrearys, Tolstois, Galloways, imperial, Governor Hugheses, or other hirsute decoration of the face.

DOCTOR, *n.* A middle-aged gentle man in a frock coat, who, whatever a person's malady, first lifts up the patient's eyelid, gazes ominously beneath, and sends for a basin of water.

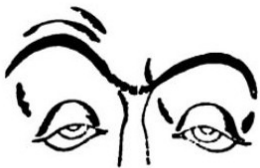
DOUGH, *n.* A substitute for custard valued possession, and the one inconpic. testable source of its greatness.

DRAWING-ROOM, *n.* A room approximately the size of a three-ring circus tent, filled with various types of period furniture, and used exclusively for holding costume balls.

DRY, *adj.* The condition of a heroine's Ruc-de-la-Paix gown immediately after the lady has been rescued from drowning

DUAL, *adj.* The kind of role offers a double opportunity for bad acting, and is therefore doubly popular with the profession.

EMINENT, *adj.* (1) A designation for bad actors to distinguish them from passable actors, who are always designated as "great." (2) Any author who writes for the screen.



Arched

EMPLOYER, *n.* A repulsive gentleman who endeavours to woo every poor and virtuous young lady who applies to him for a job.

ENDING, *n.* That moment wherein a certain fortuitous and artificial concatenation of circumstances results everyone being temporarily happy.

ENOUGH, *adj.* Two reels.

EUROPEAN, *n.* Any man with a monocle or an Inverness coat.

EVENING, *n.* That time of day when everything and everybody has turned a pale Alice blue.

EVIDENCE, *n.* The false testimony and misleading circumstances on which noble young men with picked eyebrows and polished hair are convicted of crimes they did not commit.



Island

EXIT, *n.* An elaborate piece of stage business consisting of (1) walking to door, (2) pausing with hand on knob, (3) partially opening door, (4) turning around, (5) making a remark, (6) opening door wide, (7) making a gesture with free hand, (8) stepping to door sill, (9) placing hand on out-side knob, (10) again turning around, (11) bowing, raising eyebrows, or waving free hand, and (12) reluctantly disappearing.

EXPENSE, *n.* That of which the producer is proudest, and by which the public is most impressed.

FADE-OUT, *n.* A slow and protracted means of relief, as distinguished from the "cut," which gives immediate relief.

FARM, *n.* A bucolic residence one visit to which is sufficient to infuse the blackest and most vicious of natures with an almost unearthly purity.

FEEBLE, *adj.* The mental and physical condition of all indigent parents over forty.

FOUNTAIN, *n.* A large basin of water into which a gentleman in evening clothes invariably precipitates himself during the course of a gay party.

FRENCHMAN, *n.* Any man who elegantly kisses a lady's hand when making his adieus.

FUTURE, *n.* The cinema's most valued possession, and the one incontestable source of its greatness.

GAIETY, *n.* The emotion aroused by a young lady in Greek draperies suddenly emerging from a huge cake.

GENTILE, *n.* The mere salaried employees of the motion-picture industry,

GENTLEMAN, *n.* Any man in from form-fitting evening clothes and white kid gloves, who polishes his hair and which works his eyebrows up and down while talking.

GOWN, *n.* An exclusive French creation worn by a leading lady when enacting the role of a penniless and starving orphan,

GREAT, *adj.* A word which, through promiscuous application to screen

productions, has come to have no meaning whatever, and is therefore unsusceptible of definition.

HAREM, *n.* A collection of maidens, whose sole duty is to amuse their lord and master with pseudo-classical dance steps.

HEAVEN, *n.* A rustic dell, recently mowed, with several young ladies, draped in cheese-cloth, tripping about on their toes,

HERO, *n.* That member of the cast who deliberately and unflinchingly faces marriage with the leading lady.

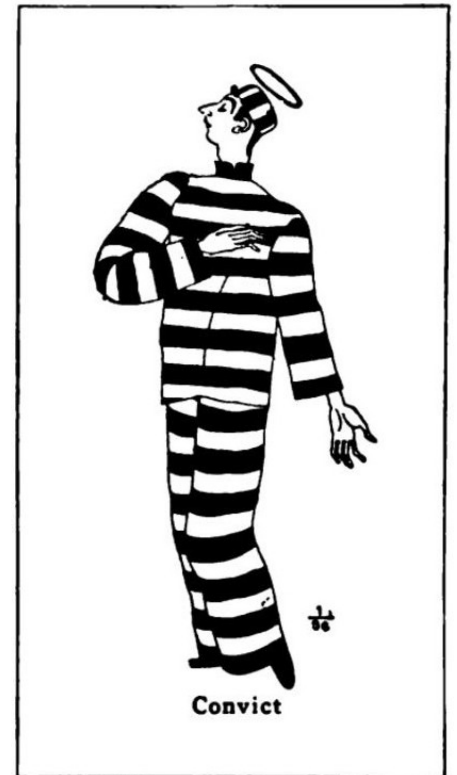
HUT, *n.* A small cabin not over ten by twelve, containing a living-room forty feet square, two large bed-rooms, a kitchen, and numerous spacious closets.

IMMACULATE, *adj.* The only kind of conception permitted by the censors.

INGINUE, *n.* A putatively young female with blonde curls, who, by way of revealing her playful nature, twists the top-hair of middle-aged gentlemen into upstanding spirals.

INJURY, *n.* A physical mishap from which the virtuous recover and the unrighteous die.

ISLAND, *n.* A piece of land covered with palm trees, where the survivors of shipwrecks are washed up in pairs -- one pair at a time.



Convict

SKETCHES BY RALPH BARTON

(To be continued)

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JAPANESE, *n.* (1) A valet. (2) A spy.

JOWL, *n.* What would seem to be the chief qualification by which an actor is chosen for the role of Wall-street magnate.

KEY, *n.* An instrument used by strict and prudish maiden aunts for locking up their beautiful but flighty young nieces who immediately escape by the window.

KEYHOLE, *n.* An aperture in a door through which a person on the outside can distinctly see everything that is going on in all parts of the room beyond.

LACHRYMAL, *adj.* Those glands of an actress which assure her the greatest number of close-ups.

LADY, *n.* A woman who carries a lorgnette, arches her brows when speaking, and shakes hands with the tips of her fingers held on a level with her eyes.

LANDLORD, *n.* A crabbed gentleman with Dundrearys and a black frock coat, who calls in person on poor and decrepit widows who are behind in their rent, and threatens eviction when it is not immediately forthcoming.

LANTERN, *n.* A kind of lamp which, though it may be extinguished by a breath, yet invariably remains lighted in the most violent blizzard or rainstorm; and casts a steady, vivid illumination over the whole countryside.

LAVISH, *adj.* A cinematographic synonym for "artistic". The more lavish a picture, the greater its artistry.

LETTER, *n.* An incriminating document which is carefully preserved.

LIBRARY, *n.* The room wherein the butler finds the gentleman of the house murdered.

LOVER, *n.* That member of a cast who is at all times clean-shaven, has curling eyelashes, and exhibits a fondness for animals.

MAGDALEN, *n.* A lady who, at one time or another, has held hands with a young man to whom she was not formally betrothed.

MALLET, *n.* A large wooden club for knocking people over the head as they come through a door.

MANUSCRIPT, *n.* The author's version of a picture, which differs in all essentials from the completed film.

MARRIAGE, *n.* The climax of nearly every motion-picture drama, which, despite the experience of centuries, is still optimistically regarded as a happy ending.

MEAL, *n.* A small social gathering at three sides of a table, occupying from thirty to sixty seconds.

MILLION, *n.* An elastic designation for any amount from 50,000 to 150,000. For example: A "million" dollar production.

MILLIONAIRE, *n.* A gentleman with a frock coat, a liveried chauffeur, a gray patch over each ear, an office sixty feet square, and an unmarried daughter who is in love with one of his noble young employees.

MOON, *n.* A satellite of the earth, from which emanates a bright blue light of an intensity slightly less than that of the sun.

NIGHTLY, *adj.* When carnivals are held in Venice.

NORTH, *n.* That section of the country where human blood is characterized by the fact that it is always Red.

OLD FASHIONED, *adj.* That which is good, noble, desirable, and sacred; as opposed to "modern," which is evil, ignoble, undesirable, and sacrilegious.

ORCHARD, *n.* Where the noble and wealthy young gentleman from the city chases the rustic heroine about among the trees immediately preceding his proposal of marriage.

ORGY, *n.* Any party at which the men don tissue-paper hats.

ORPHAN, *n.* A beautiful, pure and highly talented young lady who invariably marries wealth.

PAPER-CUTTER, *n.* A long, sharp knife, shaped like a dagger, which financiers keep on their desks, and with which, sooner or later, they are stabbed.

PARADE, *n.* The world's principal news event of the week.

PARDON, *n.* A document with which the heroine, driving a Stutz Bearcat, speeds over the crossing just ahead of the onrushing express train, in her mad dash to the prison, where they are in the act of strapping the handsome and innocent leading-man to the electric chair.

PECKSNIFF, *n.* The original censor.

PEP, *n.* An ingénue's substitute for histrionic talent.

PERSONALITY, *n.* A word which covers a multitude of bad actors.

PISTOL, *n.* A small gun which fires an endless number of shots without being reloaded, and which—no matter where it is aimed— invariably hits the fleeing victim in the seat of the trousers.

POKER, *n.* A gambling game at which someone is invariably caught cheating.

POLICEMAN, *n.* An officer of the law, who, by some gift of miraculous prevision, always appears upon the scene of a crime within thirty seconds of its commission.

POLISH, *n.* A characteristic of society gentlemen, which, for the most part, is limited to their hair.

POLLYANA, *n.* The unbilled heroine of the great majority of our motion-picture dramas.

POOR, *adj.* A temporary condition of the virtuous, immediately preceding great riches.

PROLOGUE, *n.* A short act, pantomime, or tableau, generally conceived by the local theatre manager, which has the psychological effect of making any picture that follows it seem like a masterpiece.

QUARTETTE, *n.* The basis of a De Mille society drama: the wife, the husband, the other woman, and the other man.

QUELL, *v. t.* What any noble young man can do to a strike merely by appearing calmly at the factory door and appealing to the working-men's better nature.

RACE, *n.* The climax of a Griffith picture, in which Death is beaten by a nose.

RAIN, *n.* A continuous cloudburst through which actors may walk without getting wet.

RAT, *n.* A species of animal found in large numbers in the cellars where the heroine, bound and gagged, is temporarily placed by her abductors.

RECONCILIATION, *n.* That which any child can immediately bring about merely by

appearing in its night-dress and surreptitiously placing the wife's hand into that of the husband.

REFINED, *adj.* Anyone who refrains from shaking hands, and merely bows, when acknowledging an introduction.

REFORM, *v. i.* That which all burglars do after two minutes' conversation with a child in a baby-bunting night-dress.

SANTA CLAUS, *n.* The person for whom all children, waking at night, mistake burglars, thereby unconsciously turning them into a life of purity and uplift.

SASH, *n.* An article of clothing worn by all painters, Spaniards, and forty-year-old debutantes.

SEQUEL, *n.* Another reel just as bad.

SICK, *adj.* The physical status of all babies whose fathers are out of work.

SIGHT, *n.* That which the blind always recover after being operated upon by a great specialist.

SITUATION, *n.* That moment when a certain combination of events has resulted in a pure young lady being compelled to choose between (1) permitting the villain to kiss her, or (2) standing by and witnessing her poor old father tortured to death.

SOCIETY, *n.* A coterie in which all the women carry lorgnettes and all the men wear white kid gloves after dark, and in which everyone talks with raised eyebrows and holds the little finger rigid when grasping a tea-cup.

STEM, *n.* That part of a wine-glass which inadvertently snaps between the fingers of the kindly gentleman with the gray areas over the ears, when someone proposes a toast to a certain absent lady.

STIRRUP, *n.* What no cowboy would deign to make use of when mounting a horse.

TELEPHONE, *n.* An instrument hidden inside of a large doll dressed like Madame Du Barry.

TINY, *adj.* The kind of garments which, when a husband finds them in his wife's sewing-basket, renders him speechless with amazement.

TRUNK, *n.* A receptacle in which the comedian hides just before the draymen arrive and hurl it down the stairs.

UNCLE, *n.* A benevolent elderly gentleman with money, who, because of an unhappy love affair in his youth, has never married.

USHER, *n.* A young woman of superhuman mental resistance, who is able to witness two performances of the same picture each day, for from three to seven days running, without loss of sanity.

VALISE, *n.* A receptacle which, after being carefully packed by a comedian, immediately falls open when picked up by the handle.

VICTORY, *n.* That which is invariably won by the poor, the weak, and the virtuous.

WANTON, *n.* A woman who wears a ring on her thumb.

YOKEL, *n.* A man whose whiskers grow straight out from beneath the chin.

(The End.)