

# ENGLISH AND WHAT DOES SHE MEAN?

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I had just been reading an impassioned denunciation of one more attempt to force a simplified system of spelling down the throat of a long-suffering public. All my literary sympathies were engaged in the phrase "The noble old language of Chaucer and Shakespeare is sufficiently simplified for us" when a newly-landed friend from Berlin approached and began his daily course in "English and What Does She Mean?"

He is a very clever chap and can make four out of two and too every time.

"I vish to know vot it iss, a chack, you call it in English, vot is dot in Choiman?"

"Oh, jack: why that's the diminutive for John, Hans, you call it in your language."

"Ja so: then chack rabbit, dot iss a leedle rabbit, not?"

"No, just the reverse: it's a very large rabbit."

"Ach, denn Chack of Spades, it iss a very larch spade?"

"Not exactly; it's a playing card, same as the Knave of Spades."

"So-o! Now iss all clear, chack means knave, also Chack of Heart iss Knave of Hearts, Chack of Cloobs iss Knave of Cloobs, chack-of-all-trades is knave of all trades - a rascal, nein?"

"Well, you're off the track again, my friend, a jack-of-all-trades is a fellow who tries his hand at every occupation and as the saying goes, is master of none."

"Ach, gewiss, no master, boss of nodings, gut! Dot is therefore an example, vagon-chack, a vagon midout a boss, no driver, you call. Nicht wahr?"

"Not precisely! That's a simple machine for raising a wagon."

"Und iss a roof chack for to raise the roof, a machine?"

"No, no! That's to let out the smoke - through the roof, you know."

"Also - a steeple chack lets dot smoke oud through the steeple?"

"Well, how you do jump to conclusions! A steeple jack is a man who climbs a steeple to make repairs or paint it."

"To paint it! Mein Gott! Say, do I chump to conclushions ven

I ask if an apple-chack paints an apple?"

"Now, don't get hot under the collar! Let's reason it out logically. Apple-jack is a drink made by extracting the juice from apples and..."

"Vait, I too am lochical, I know vot you would add; a chack pot, dot iss drink extracted from a pot. Am I right?"

"Right as usual, and I am going to forestall your next remark by adding that cracker-jack is the juice of a cracker. Put it down in your note book quickly. Lumber jack is extracted from lumber, the same as maple syrup. Got it?"

"Und boot-chack, how can dot be? No juice comes out of a boot, I guess!"

"No, that is different, a boot jack is to take off a boot with."

"Ach, now see I plainly vot iss a chack; it iss vot you call in slang a take-off. Now chust vun more question, lieber Freund, on vot iss a chackass, a take-off? Can you tell me dot?"

"Yes, indeed! Note this item very carefully: take-off on the man who boils over on the declaration that the noble old language of Chaucer is sufficiently simplified for him. Got it all!"

"Besten dank, now at last I know vot iss a chack."

### **LANGUAGE INFORMANTS WANTED**

*The editor of Maledicta is conducting a worldwide survey of contemporary vocabulary of sex, excretions, and offensive exclamations for his uncensored Dictionary of Regional Anatomical Terms. Anyone interested in participating will receive a copy of the 24-page Maledicta Onomastic Questionnaire containing some 250 questions about regional, humorous, euphemistic, and taboo terms for sexual body parts and activities, excretions, types of people, as well as terms of abuse, exclamations of anger, disgust, etc.*

*Informants are needed from every region of North America and especially from all other areas worldwide where English is spoken: Great Britain, South Africa, Australia, Jamaica, Bahamas, etc. As this survey covers all languages, we also need informants for Welsh, Afrikaans, and other languages.*

*To obtain a copy of the Questionnaire, please write to Dr. R. Aman, 331 South Greenfield Ave., Waukesha, Wisconsin 53186 USA.*