

ERIC PARTRIDGE

# A DICTIONARY OF SLANG AND UNCONVENTIONAL ENGLISH

Colloquialisms and Catch-phrases

Solecisms and Catachreses

Nicknames

Vulgarisms

and

such Americanisms as have been naturalized



LONDON

ROUTLEDGE & KEGAN PAUL LTD

BROADWAY HOUSE: 68-74 CARTER LANE, E.C.4

## PREFACE

THIS dictionary, at which I have worked harder than (I hope, but should not swear) I shall ever work again and which incorporates the results of a close observation of colloquial speech for many years, is designed to form a humble companion to the monumental *Oxford English Dictionary*, from which I am proud to have learnt a very great amount.

*A Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, i.e. of linguistically unconventional English, should be of interest to word-lovers ; but it should also be useful to the general as well as the cultured reader, to the scholar and the linguist, to the foreigner and the American. I have, in fact, kept the foreigner as well as the English-speaker in mind ; and I have often compared British with American usage. In short, the field is of all English other than standard and other than dialectal.

Although I have not worked out the proportions, I should say that, merely approximately, they are :

Slang and Cant . . . . .	50%
Colloquialisms . . . . .	35%
Solecisms and Catachreses . . . . .	6½%
Catch-phrases . . . . .	6½%
Nicknames * . . . . .	1½%
Vulgarisms . . . . .	½%

(By the last, I understand words and phrases that, in no way slangy, are avoided in polite society.) For the interrelations of these classes, I must refer the reader to my *Slang To-day and Yesterday : a Study and a History*, where these interrelations are treated in some detail.

The degree of comprehensiveness ? This may best be gauged by comparing the relevant terms in any one letter (I suggest a ' short ' one like *o* or *v*) of either *The Oxford English Dictionary* and its *Supplement* or Farmer and Henley's *Slang and its Analogues* with the terms in the same letter here (including the inevitable Addenda). On this point, again, I have not worked out the proportions, but I should guess that whereas the *O.E.D.* contains † roughly 30% more than *F. & H.*, and *F. & H.* has some 20% not in the *O.E.D.*, the present dictionary contains approximately 35% more than the other two

\* I am keenly aware that, in these, the Dictionary is woefully defective.

† For the period up to 1904, when *F. & H.* was completed.

taken together and, except accidentally, has missed nothing included in those two works. Nor are my additions confined to the period since ca. 1800, a period for which—owing to the partial neglect of Vaux, Egan, ‘John Bee’, Brandon, ‘Ducange Anglicus’, Hotten, Ware, and Collinson, to the literally complete neglect of Baumann and Lyell, and the virtually complete neglect of Manchon, not to mention the incomplete use made of the glossaries of military and naval unconventional terms—the lexicography of slang and other unconventional English is gravely inadequate: even such 17th–18th century dictionaries as Coles’s, B.E.’s, and Grose’s have been only culled, not used thoroughly. Nor has proper attention been given, in the matter of dates, to the various editions of Grose (1785, 1788, 1796, 1811, 1823) and Hotten (1859, 1860, 1864, 1872, 1874): collation has been sporadic.

For Farmer & Henley there was only the excuse (which I hasten to make for my own shortcomings) that certain sources were not examined; the *O.E.D.* is differently placed, its aim, for unconventional English, being selective—it has omitted what it deemed ephemeral. In the vast majority of instances, the omissions from, e.g., B.E., Grose, Hotten, Farmer & Henley, Ware, and others, were deliberate: yet, with all due respect, I submit that if Harman was incorporated almost *in toto*, so should B.E. and Grose (to take but two examples) have been. The *O.E.D.*, moreover, has omitted certain vulgarisms and included others. Should a lexicographer, if he includes *any* vulgarisms (in any sense of that term), omit the others? I have given them all. (My rule, in the matter of unpleasant terms, has been to deal with them as briefly, as astringently, as aseptically as was consistent with clarity and adequacy; in a few instances, I had to force myself to overcome an instinctive repugnance; for these I ask the indulgence of my readers.)

It must not, however, be thought that I am in the least ungrateful to either the *O.E.D.* or *F. & H.* I have noted *every* debt \* to the former, not merely for the sake of its authority but to indicate my profound admiration for its work; to the latter, I have made few references—for the simple reason that the publishers have given me *carte blanche* permission to use it. But it may be assumed that, for the period up to 1904, and where *no* author or dictionary is quoted, the debt is, in most instances, to Farmer & Henley—who, by the way, have never received their dues.

It has, I think, been made clear that I also owe a very great deal to such dictionaries and glossaries as those of Weekley, Apperson; Coles, B.E., Grose; ‘Jon Bee’, Hotten; Baumann, Ware; Manchon, Collinson,† Lyell; Fraser & Gibbons, and Bowen.

Yet, as a detailed examination of these pages will show, I have added considerably from my own knowledge of language-byways and from my own reading, much of the latter having been undertaken with this specific end in view.

But also I am fully aware that there must be errors, both typographical and other, and that, inevitably, there are numerous omissions. Here and now, may I say that I

\* Often, indeed, I have preferred its evidence to that on which I came independently.

† Professor W. E. Collinson’s admirable *Contemporary English*. A *personal speech record*, 1927 (Leipzig and Berlin), is mentioned here for convenience’ sake.

shall be deeply grateful for notification (and note) of errors and for words and phrases that, through ignorance, I have omitted.\*

Finally, it is a pleasure to thank, for terms † that I might well have failed to encounter, the following lady and gentlemen :

Mr J. J. W. Pollard, Mr G. D. Nicolson, Mr G. Ramsay, Mr K. G. Wyness-Mitchell, Mr G. G. M. Mitchell, Mr A. E. Strong, Mr Robert E. Brown (of Hamilton), all of New Zealand ; Mr John Beames, of Canada ; Mr Stanley Deegan, Mrs J. Litchfield, Mr H. C. McKay, of Australia ; Dr Jean Bordeaux, of Los Angeles. From Great Britain : Mr John Gibbons (most unselfishly), Mr Alastair Baxter (a long, valuable list), Mr Julian Franklyn (author of *This Gutter Life*), Mr John Brophy, Professor J. R. Sutherland, Mr J. Hodgson Lobley, R.B.A., Mr Alfred Atkins, the actor, Major-General A. P. Wavell, C.M.G., Commander W. M. Ross, Major A. J. Dawson, Mr R. A. Auty, Mr Allan M. Laing, Mr R. A. Walker, Mr G. W. Pirie, Mr D. E. Yates, Mr Joe Mourant, Mr Hugh Milner, Sgt T. Waterman, the Rev. A. K. Chignell, the Rev. A. Trevellick Cape, Mr Henry Gray, Mr E. Unné, Mr Malcolm McDougall, Mr R. B. Oram, Mr L. S. Tugwell, Mr V. C. Brodie, Mr Douglas Buchanan, Mr Will T. Fleet, Mr Fred Burton, Mr Alfred T. Chenhalls, Mr Digby A. Smith, Mr George S. Robinson (London), Mr Arthur W. Allen, Mr Frank Dean, Mr M. C. Way, Mr David MacGibbon, Mr A. Jameson, Mr Jack Lindsay, Mr 'David Hume' (of 'thriller' fame), Mr J. G. Considine, the Rev. M. Summers, Mr C. H. Davis, Mr H. E. A. Richardson, Mr J. Hall Richardson, Mr R. Ellis Roberts, Mr George Baker (who has a notable knowledge of unconventional English and no selfishness), Mr F. R. Jelley, Mr Barry Moore, Mr H. C. Cardew-Rendle, Mr Norman T. McMurdo, Mr R. H. Parrott, Mr F. Willis (Sheffield), Mr E. C. Pattison (of *A Martial Medley*), and, for introducing me to the work of Clarence Rook and the early work of Edwin Pugh, Mr Wilson Benington.

E. P.

LONDON ; November 11, 1936.

\* With information on their *milieu* and period, please ! This applies also to omitted senses of terms and phrases that are already represented in this work.

† The number of terms so gleaned is approximately one-eighth of the number found in the course of 'ad hoc' reading (outside the dictionaries and glossaries, *bien entendu*).

## NOTE TO SECOND EDITION

HEARTY thanks must be—and readily are—given to the following gentlemen for notice of errors and omissions:—Dr W. P. Barrett; Colonel Bates; Mr Wilson Benington; Mr John Brophy; Lieut.-General Sir J. R. E. Charles, K.C.B.; Dr M. Clement, M.D.; ‘Mr J. J. Connington’, very generously; Mr B. Crocker; Mr James Curtis, author of that masterly underworld novel, *The Gilt Kid*; Mr Brian Frith; M. François Fosca; Mr Julian Franklyn (a very valuable list); Mr David Garnett; Mr G. W. Gough; Mr Robert Graves; illegible signature (Jewish terms); Mr Harold James; Mr Gershon Legman; Mr J. Langley Levy; Mr Jack Lindsay; Dr E. V. Lucas; Mr David MacGibbon; Mr H. L. Menchen; Mr Hamish Miles; Mr George Milne; Mr Raymond Mortimer; Mr Robert Nott; Dr C. T. Onions, C.B.E.; Mr H. D. Poole; Mr Vernon Rendall (notably); Mr Basil de Sélincourt; Mr Kazim Raza Siddiqui (Lucknow); Mr G. W. Stonier, most generously; Professor J. R. Sutherland; the leader-writer in *The Times* (Feb. 15, 1937) and the reviewer in *The Times Literary Supplement*; Mr Evelyn Waugh; Major-General A. P. Wavell, C.M.G. (extensively); Professor Ernest Weekley; Mr Wilfred Whitten. These gentlemen have, in the aggregate, contributed about one-third of the new terms (and senses) incorporated, in this new edition, into the already existing Addenda: and it is more by good luck than by good management that my own contribution amounts to so much as two-thirds; I admit, however, that I looked hard for the luck.

July 9, 1937.

E. P.

## NOTE TO THIRD EDITION

AFTER an interval of eleven years, with the fertilizing influence of the war, there has been a considerable increase of material, especially in the combatant services. Both the new words, and the additional matter affecting the older material, have been incorporated into the Addenda—a supplement that brings together, in this one section, not only the Addenda of the second edition (1938) but also the entirety of the later, and of the later-discovered, material. To mention every single person that has helped me, in one degree or another, would be almost impossible, but I must particularize the kindness of Mr Sidney J. Baker and Lieut. Wilfred Granville, R.N.V.R., without whose published and unpublished works these Addenda would be so very much poorer; for the new South African matter, I am indebted to the four correspondents that supplied me with South African cant for *A Dictionary of the Underworld*, where, by the way, the curious will find a much fuller treatment of such cant terms as are included in *A Dictionary of Slang* and many not there included, this applying especially to terms of American origin. Of Service contributors, one of the most valuable has been Sgt-Pilot F. Rhodes (to quote his rank in September, 1942); Sgt Gerald Emanuel (letter of March 29, 1945) vies with him; and Flying-Officer Robert Hinde and Wing-Commander Robin McDouall have been most helpful. My best Army contributor has been Lieut. Frank Roberts, R.A., now a master at Cotton College. Nor may I, without the grossest discourtesy, omit the names of Mr F. W. Thomas (of *The Star*); the late Professor A. W. Stewart (widely known as ‘J. J. Connington’, writer of detective novels); and, above all, Mr Albert Petch (of Bournemouth)—three loyal helpers. Also, at the eleventh hour, I have received a valuable set of pellucid and scholarly notes from Mr Laurie Atkinson.

July 31, 1948.

E. P.

## NOTE TO FOURTH EDITION

A few corrections have been made.  
June 14, 1950.

E. P.

## ABBREVIATIONS AND SIGNS

abbr.	.	.	.	abbreviation, or shortening; abbreviated, abridged
adj.	.	.	.	adjective
adv.	.	.	.	adverb
after	.	.	.	after the fashion of; on the analogy of
anon.	.	.	.	anonymous
app.	.	.	.	apparently
Apperson	.	.	.	G. L. Apperson, <i>English Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases</i> , 1929
B. & P.	.	.	.	Brophy & Partridge, <i>Songs and Slang of the British Soldier, 1914-1918</i> (3rd ed., 1931)
Barrère & Leland	.	.	.	Barrère & Leland, <i>A Dictionary of Slang, Jargon, and Cant</i> , 1889-90
Baumann	.	.	.	Heinrich Baumann's <i>Londonismen</i> , 1887
B.E.	.	.	.	B.E.'s <i>Dictionary of the Canting Crew</i> , ca. 1690. (Better dated 1698-99)
Bee	.	.	.	'Jon Bee', <i>Dictionary</i> , 1823.
Bowen	.	.	.	F. Bowen's <i>Sea Slang</i> , 1929
Brandon	.	.	.	Brandon's Glossary of Cant in 'Ducange Anglicus'
c.	.	.	.	cant, i.e. language of the underworld
C.	.	.	.	century; as C. 18, the 18th century
c. and low	.	.	.	cant and low slang
ca.	.	.	.	about (the year . . .)
cf.	.	.	.	compare
C.O.D.	.	.	.	<i>Concise Oxford Dictionary</i>
Coles.	.	.	.	E. Coles, <i>Dictionary</i> , 1676
coll.	.	.	.	colloquial(ism)
Collinson	.	.	.	W. E. Collinson, <i>Contemporary English</i> , 1927
c.p.	.	.	.	a catch-phrase
d.	.	.	.	died
Dawson	.	.	.	L. Dawson's <i>Nicknames and Pseudonyms</i> , 1908
dial.	.	.	.	dialect; dialectal(ly)
Dict.	.	.	.	Dictionary
D.N.B.	.	.	.	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
'Ducange Anglicus'	.	.	.	his <i>The Vulgar Tongue</i> , 1857
ed.	.	.	.	edition
E.D.D.	.	.	.	<i>The English Dialect Dictionary</i> , by Joseph Wright
e.g.	.	.	.	for example
Egan's Grose	.	.	.	See 'Grose' below.
Eng.	.	.	.	English
esp.	.	.	.	especially
ex	.	.	.	from; derived from
F. & Gibbons	.	.	.	Fraser & Gibbons, <i>Soldier and Sailor Words and Phrases</i> , 1925
F. & H.	.	.	.	Farmer & Henley's <i>Slang and its Analogues</i> , 7 vols., 1890-1904
fig.	.	.	.	figurative(ly)
fl.	.	.	.	flourished ( <i>floruit</i> )

Fowler	.	.	.	H. W. Fowler's <i>Modern English Usage</i> , 1926
Fr.	.	.	.	French
gen.	.	.	.	general(ly); usual(ly)
Ger.	.	.	.	German
Gr.	.	.	.	Greek
Grose	.	.	.	Grose's <i>Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue</i> (1785, 1788, 1796, 1811, 1823). Hence, Egan's Grose = Egan's ed. of Grose, 1823. Grose, P. = my annotated reprint of the 3rd ed.
G.W.	.	.	.	The War of 1914-18
H.	.	.	.	J. C. Hotten, <i>The Slang Dictionary</i> , 1859, 1860, etc.
ibid.	.	.	.	in the same authority or book
id.	.	.	.	the same
i.e.	.	.	.	that is
imm.	.	.	.	immediately
Irwin	.	.	.	Godfrey Irwin, <i>American Tramp and Underworld Slang</i> , 1931
It.	.	.	.	Italian
j.	.	.	.	jargon, i.e. technical(ity)
Jice Doone	.	.	.	Jice Doone, <i>Timely Tips to New Australians</i> , 1926
L.	.	.	.	Latin
Lewis	.	.	.	W. J. Lewis, <i>The Language of Cricket</i> , 1934
<i>Lex. Bal.</i>	.	.	.	<i>The Lexicon Balatronicum</i> , or 4th ed. of Grose, 1811
lit.	.	.	.	literal(ly)
literary	.	.	.	literary English, i.e. unused in ordinary speech
Lyell.	.	.	.	T. Lyell's <i>Slang, Phrase and Idiom in Colloquial English</i> , 1931
Manchon	.	.	.	J. Manchon's <i>Le Slang</i> , 1923
M.E.	.	.	.	Middle English
mod.	.	.	.	modern
Morris	.	.	.	E. E. Morris, <i>Austral English</i> , 1898
n.	.	.	.	noun
n.b.	.	.	.	note carefully
ob.	.	.	.	obsolescent; cf. †
occ.	.	.	.	occasional(ly)
O.E.	.	.	.	Old English; i.e. before ca. 1150
O.E.D. (Sup.)	.	.	.	<i>The Oxford English Dictionary</i> (Supplement)
on	.	.	.	on the analogy of
Onions	.	.	.	C. T. Onions, <i>A Shakespeare Glossary</i> , ed. of 1912
opp.	.	.	.	opposite; as opposed to
orig.	.	.	.	original(ly)
Pettman	.	.	.	C. Pettman, <i>Africanderisms</i> , 1913
pl.	.	.	.	plural; in the plural
Port.	.	.	.	Portuguese
ppl.	.	.	.	participle; participial
prob.	.	.	.	probable, probably
pron.	.	.	.	pronounced; pronunciation
pub.	.	.	.	published
q.v.	.	.	.	which see!
resp.	.	.	.	respective(ly)
s.	.	.	.	slang
sc.	.	.	.	supply!; understand!
S.E.	.	.	.	Standard English
<i>Slang</i>	.	.	.	<i>My Slang To-Day and Yesterday</i> , revised ed., 1935
Smart & Crofton	.	.	.	B. C. Smart & H. T. Crofton, <i>The Dialect of the English Gypsies</i> , revised ed., 1875

S.O.D.	. . .	<i>The Shorter Oxford Dictionary</i>
sol.	. . .	solecism; solecistic
Sp.	. . .	Spanish
s.v.	. . .	see at
temp.	. . .	in or at the time of
Thornton	. . .	R. H. Thornton's <i>American Glossary</i> , 1912
U.S.	. . .	The United States of America; American
v.	. . .	verb. Hence, <i>v.i.</i> , intransitive; <i>v.t.</i> , transitive
Vaux	. . .	J. H. Vaux's 'Glossary of Cant, 1812', in his <i>Memoirs</i> , 1819
vbl.n.	. . .	verbal noun
vulg.	. . .	vulgar(ism). See Preface
W.	. . .	Ernest Weekley's <i>Etymological Dictionary of Modern English</i>
Ware	. . .	J. Redding Ware's <i>Passing English</i> , 1909
<i>Words!</i>	. . .	My <i>Words, Words, Words!</i> , 1933
Yule & Burnell	. . .	Yule & Burnell, <i>Hobson-Jobson</i> , revised ed., 1903

— (before a date)	. . .	known to exist then and presumably used some years earlier <sup>1</sup>
+ (after a date)	. . .	in significant first use then, but still extant
† . . .	. . .	obsolete; cf. ob.
= . . .	. . .	equal(s); equal to; equivalent to
> . . .	. . .	become(s); became
* before a word	. . .	a cant term

## A NOTE ON ARRANGEMENT

There are two main systems of arranging words in a dictionary. The strictly alphabetical; the 'something before nothing'. No system is wholly satisfactory; the arrangements<sup>2</sup> in the 'O.E.D.', in 'Webster' and, to compare small things with great, the present dictionary are open to severe criticism—severe but unreasonable. No arrangement is, for no arrangement can be, perfect.

Here, the 'something before nothing' system has been adopted—for the simple reason that it is the most suitable to a dictionary of this kind. Thus *A.B.* precedes *abaddon*, but it also precedes *Aaron*. Perhaps an example is more illuminating: *a*; *A.A. of the G.G.*; *A.B.*; *A.B.C.*; *A.B.C., as easy as*; *a-cockbill*; *a-crash of, go*; *A.D.*; *a-doing of*; *a.f.*; *A from a windmill*; *Al*; *Aaron*; *abaa*; *abaddon*; *abaht*. Further, all *come* (or *come-*) terms, beginning with *come*, including *come it*, *come out*, *come the . . .*, and ending with *come Yorkshire*, precede *comedy-merchant*. Terms that are spelt both as two words (e.g. *cock-tail*) and as one (*cocktail*) present a difficulty; I give them as, e.g., *cock-tail*, and at, e.g., *cocktail* insert a cross-reference: to scholars, some of these precautions may seem mere foolishness, but there are others to be considered.

<sup>1</sup> A date, unpreceded by 'ca.', signifies that this is the earliest discovered record; it is well to bear in mind, however, that in slang, cant, colloquialism, catch-phrase, and solecism, the first use goes back, generally a few, occasionally many, years earlier.

<sup>2</sup> An examination of any ten consecutive pages in these three works will show the recalcitrance of the English (and American) vocabulary—with its 'analytical' phrases—to the rigidity, and the desirability, of lexicographical principles, however sound those principles may be.



# CORRIGENDA

(Pages 1-974)

- 2, **abo**. Read 'mid C. 19-20' and 'Australian coll.'
- 18, **article of virtue**. For 'virgins' read 'virgin'.
- 19, **aste**. For second line read 'Perhaps ex It. *asta*, auction'.—**atcha**! For 'C. 20' read 'from ca. 1860'.  
Ex Hindustani *accha*, good.—**Atkins**. Read: 'See **tommy**, 4'
- 23, **back of Bourke**. In line 3, read 'north-western N.S.W.'
- 27, **baked**. For '1850' read '1910'.
- 28, **balaam**. For '1826' read '1818'.
- 31, **bang goes saxpence**! : see Addenda, s.v. **saxpence**...
- 38, **batty**. 'Batta' should be 'bhatta'. 45, **bell, ring the**, line 2: read 'strength-testing'.
- 49, **Bess o' Bedlam**. The period should be 'C. 17—early 19'. See esp. Jack Lindsay's *Tom o' Bedlam*.
- 54, **bint**. In Arabic *bint* has no lit. meaning other than 'daughter'.
- 56, **bit of cavalry**. For '1825-80' read '1825-1915'.—**bit of sticks**. For 'corpse' read 'copse'.
- 59, **Black Hole, the**, sense 2, line 2. The date, obviously, should be 1757!
- 75, **boiled**. For 'C. 20' read 'from ca. 1875; orig. among Australian gold-diggers'.
- 76, **bolo**. In Hindustani *bolo the bat* would rather mean 'speak the matter (or words)'.
- 79, **bookmaker's pocket** should be **book-maker's**...
- 81, **booze the jib** should read 'booze one's (or the) jib or tip; also **booze up the jib**'.
- 91, **break the neck of**. For '1860' read '1810'. 98, **brunch**. Current at Cambridge in 1893: Arnold Wall.
- 102, **bug**, v. 3. For 'bug over' read '*bug over*'.
- 106, **bum**, adj. See Addenda.
- 107, **bum-fodder**. Sense 1 goes back to ca. 1700.
- 108, **bundabust**. 'A tying, a binding' should be 'a tying and binding'. The word also means 'revenue settlement'; often spelt *bundobust*.
- 110, **buoy, round the**. Read **buoy, go round the**.
- 115, **buttered bun**. In sense 2, read 'mid-C. 17-20'.
- 132, **cat**, v., line 1. Read 'C. 18'.
- 137, **chai**. In line 3, read '*char*'.
- 140, **charwallah** should have been printed **char-wallah**.
- 145, **cheesy-hammy**... Read... **topsides**.
- 150, **chootah**. Ex Urdu *chota*, small.—**chop**. Ex Hindi *chhap*, lit. a print, hence a seal or brand.
- 153, **chuck a dummy**, line 1. 'To', not 'A'.
- 169, **cold tea**. The later limit should be 1910.
- 180, **coppers, hot**. Ignore both the entries and see **hot coppers**.
- 183, **cottage**, 2. For 'ca. 1900-12' read 'from ca. 1900; slightly ob'.
- 189, **crate**. Read '1914'.
- 191, col. 1, line 1. For 'dia.' read 'dial'.
- 206, **dance**, v. 2. The date should be 'ca. 1650'. The term appears in Randle Holme's *Armory*, 1688.
- 220, **Digby duck** should come between **dig up** and **digger**; **dig out after** should follow **dig out**.
- 221, **dime museum**. Obviously Ware meant 'tenth'.
- 223, **dipped in wing** should be **dipped in the wing**.
- 227, **do it**. Add ': C. 19-20'.
- 233, **domino-thumper**. For 'Barrière' read 'Barrère'.—**donkey P, who stole the**. The period should be 'ca. 1835-1910'.
- 235, **doolally**..., line 5. Read 'See also...'
- 238, **down on, put a**. For '1840' read '1800'.
- 243, **dumping-dépôt**. For 'Conington' read 'Connington'.
- 258, **equality Jack**. For dating, read 'since ca. 1810'.
- 276, **fine ham**... For '(—1934)' read ': C. 20'.
- 277, **finnif**. B. & L. defines *finnup ready* as 'a five-pound note'.
- 287, **flip**, n., 3. Read 'A (short)'.
- 292, **flying dustman**. Read: See Addenda.
- 304, **frosty face**. For '1890' read '1910'.
- 313, **gamaliel**, lines 2-4. Read 'Ex the name of several rabbis famous in the first two or three Christian centuries'. (There was a confusion with Gallio.)
- 332, **glass-work**. For '1880' read '1905'.—**Glesca Kulies** should be **Glesca Keelies**.
- 358, **grubby**. The later limit should be 1920.
- 363, **gutsy**. For 'courage' read 'courageous'.
- 364, **guy**, n., 6. See Addenda.
- 365, **h.o.p., on the**. Add 'From ca. 1880'.
- 372, **hang it out**, line 3. For '2' read '3'.

- 373, **hanky-spanky**. Supply a period after '1880'.—For '**Hans Corvel's ring**' read '**... Carvel's ...**'
- 383, **hearty**, line 5. For '1920' read '1910'.
- 386, **hell and high water** should immediately precede **hell and spots**.
- 390, first line. For 'late' read 'mid': the term occurs in *Verdant Green*.—**high-flyer**, 5, the later date should be 1910.
- 394, **Hobson Jobson**. For 'Mohammedan wailing cry' read 'Shia (or Shia-Mohammedan) wailing cry'.  
'Wailing cries are forbidden in Muslim religion' (Kazim Raza Siddiqui, in letter to editor).
- 412, **how's your poor feet** dates from the Great Exhibition of 1851: witness J. Leech's sketches.
- 415, **hunger**. The period, obviously, should be C. 14-15.
- 421, **impot**. Change '1890' to '1880'.
- 433, col. 2, **jan**. '**Murk-All**' should be '**Mark-All**'.
- 435, **jay**, last line. Read 'easy'.
- 436, **jerk the cat**. The references should be to **cat, shoot the**.
- 437, **jerry**, n., 4. The period should be: ca. 1840-1900.
- 444, **Jollies, the**. Extant in war of 1939-45.
- 448, **jungli**. Ex Urdu; *jungli* means, lit., 'belonging to jungle', hence uncouth or uncultured.
- 448, **juwaub**. In Hindustani also does it mean 'refusal' and 'dismissal'. 449, **kath**, line 4, read '**Alpers**'.
- 450, **klep**, v. Delete the period after 'Ex'.
- 456, **king**. For second '2', read '3'.
- 463, **knuckled**. For 'handsome' read 'hand-sewn'.
- 471, **lattice**. Delete this reference.
- 476, **left, be or get**. Read '1890'.—**leg on**. 'Burns', not 'Bruns'.
- 477, **length of one's foot**. The reference should be to **foot, know the length of one's**.
- 480, **lie nailed to the counter**. The reference should be to the entry at '[nab, to bite gently', p. 548.
- 491, **long lie** (following **long**, adv.) should follow **long legs**, p. 492.
- 503, **madam**. For '4' read '3'.
- 505, **main-brace, splice the**. See Addenda.
- 506, **make, on the**. 'Adopted'.
- 512, line 1: insert comma after 'horse-dealer'.
- 513, **May**. For 'Occ. *Mays*' read 'In C. 20, always *Mays*'.
- 521, **monkey-coat**. Insert hyphen before **jacket**.
- 529, **muck-train**. The date should be 1850-90.—In col. 2, both at head of page and at entry, **mug-fog** should be **mud-fog**.
- muckin**. Not *makkhn* but *makkhan*.
- 540, **mud-picker**, 1: the earlier date should be 1885.—**mud-pipes**: see Addenda.
- 543, **mumm ing-booth**. For 'late C. 19-' read 'mid-C. 18-'.
- 567, **nofigu**. Not 'Keltner' but 'Kettner'.
- 580, **oh**. Not in *Dict.* but in Addenda are the following to be found:—**oh, after you!**; **oh, dummy!**; **oh, swallow yourself!**
- 586, **old tots** should be **Old Tots**.
- 590, 3rd entry should read '**ooja-ka-piv** or **ooja-ka** (or **cum**)-**pivvy**'.
- 601, **pal**, n. In line 9, for 'ex' read 'cf.'
- 606, **parentheses** is out of position: it should come on p. 605, between **Paree** and **parenthesis**.
- 609, **pastry**. For '1917' read '1885'; before '**Manchon**' insert '**Barrère & Leland**'.
- 610, **Paul's pigeon**. For ca. '1550-1750' read 'from ca. 1550'.
- 616, **pen**, 3. The earlier date should be 1870.
- 622, **phenomenon**. 'Crumbles' should be 'Crummles'.
- 630, **pill**, v., 2. Earlier date; 1885.
- 632, **pink**, adj., 3: '**Bloody**'.—**pints round**: this should be on p. 633, between **pintle-smith** and **pinurt pots**.
- 635, **Piss-Pot Hall**. Read 'Clapton'. At end of page, read '*King Henry the Fifth*, II, ii'.
- 643, **poddy**, fat; cf. 'sense 1 of:' belongs to prec. line.
- 649, **poot**. 'I cannot find any such Hindustani word. Probably it is Oriental beggars' version of **some** European word' (K. R. Siddiqui).
- 661, **proggins**. See Addenda.
- 665, **puckerow**. Properly the Hindustani word (which means 'seize' or 'hold') cannot be compared with the Maori (which means 'broken' or 'crushed').
- 671, **pusserpock**, 2. See Addenda.
- 685, **Ralph**, 2. The date should be 1810.
- 688, **rat-trap**. Sense 1 survived until the end of the century.
- 692, **red face, have a**. Also *tak a r.f. to oneself* and dating from before the G.W.
- 701, **rivets**. The earlier date should be 1875. Extant: in, e.g., J. Curtis, *You're in the Racket Too*, 1937.
- 705, **roosting-key** should be **roosting-ken**.
- 708, **roughing**. For 'scragging' read 'ragging'. See Addenda.
- 712, 'Rugby School slang': insert bracket at end of entry and see the note at **Oxford-er** in Addenda.
- 721, **sahib**. 'In Arabic and Urdu "sahib" is a respectful address to all and not confined to Europeans only, though always used for Europeans' (Siddiqui).
- 724, **sam I, upon my**. For 'See preceding entry' read 'See **sam, stand**'.
- 725, **sandbag**, n. In line 3, 1820 should obviously be 1920.
- 727, **sargentlemanly**. Read 'So gentlemanly'.
- 749, **shakes, the**. Sense 3 goes back to ca. 1880.
- 776, **skitting-dealer**. For 'C. 19' read 'C. 18'.—**skittles**. In last line, read, '**Pagett**'.
- 779, **slant**, v. In line 1, '1899' should read '1890'.

- 780, **slater**, line 2. Read 'less'.
- 791, **snarl**. The dating should read: from ca. 1860.
- 792, **sneezes**. In line 4, for '—ins.—' read 'quite'. Something very odd happened here!
- 794, **snooty**. In line 4, read 'that' for 'preceding'.
- 803, **sowcar**. Ex Hindustani *sahukar*, a native banker, esp. one doing business on a large scale. Most Hindu bankers are misers, hence the meaning of *sowcar*.
- 806, **spec**, 4. Alter date to 'mid-C. 18-20'.
- 807, col. 2, **spirrib** should be **sperrib**.—**spess**: remembered in 1879 (Professor Arnold Wall)
- 809, **spill the beans**, line 4. Read *Bellona*.
- 811, **splice**, v., 3. For '1903' read '1897'.
- 813, **spoffy**. In line 2, for '3' read '2'.
- 824, **standing bridge** should be **standing budge**.
- 827, **steaming**. For '1903' read '1897'.
- 837, **straight-up**. Also as exclamation. Dating since ca. 1905. Elaboration of synonymous **straight**.
- 838, **strawer**, 2. For '1903' read '1890'.
- 839, **strides**. In line 1, read '1890' for '1904'.
- 840, **strike-me-blind**. For '1904' read '1890'.—**stringer**. Ditto.
- 842, **stuff**, n., 5. For 'C. 20' read 'late C. 19-20', and for '1904' read '1890'.
- 847, **Sunday clothes**. Add: From ca. 1880.
- 851, **swan-slinger**. For '1904' read '1890'.
- 853, **sweat one's guts out**. For 'Lyell' read 'Barrère & Leland'.
- 862, **take the biscuit**. For '1923' read '1890'.—**take care of dowb** should be . . . **Dowb**.
- 869, Ir col. 1, line 3, for *teeg* read *tayg*.
- 870, **\*tekelite**, 2. For 'Robert' read 'Roger'.
- 898, **too many for**. For 'Juggers' read 'Jaggers'.—For **tools, fixed . . .** read **tools, fined . . .**
- 899, **top, over the**. Read 'See **top, go over the**'.
- 906, **trampler**. The dating should be 1605-50.
- 907, **traverse**. For '**cart, traverse the**' read '**cart, walk the**'.
- 910, **triple tree**. Randolph, 1634.
- 915, **tumbler**, 4. For '1904' read '1890'.—**tug**, line 5. Read 'work'.
- 924, **ultray**. See Addenda.
- 931, **very**. Read 'sentence'.
- 933, **voker**. In line 2, for 'the orig.' read 'a debased'. Perhaps *voker* is a mere misapprehension for *rokker* (rocker).
- 937, **waltz Matilda**. Prob. since 1880; song ex phrase.—**wanky**. See Addenda.
- 941, **waunds**! Type adrift!
- 943, **weenie**. In line 4, for 'C. 20. F. & H., 1904' read 'late C. 19-20. Barrère & Leland'.
- 945, **Westphalia**. '1904' read '1890'.
- 951, **whip**, n., 2. For '(—1904). F. & H.' read '(—1890), Barrère & Leland'. And for **whip-sticks**, ditto.
- 953, **whistle and ride**: ditto.
- 954, **white-horsed in**: ditto.—**white stuff** is earlier recorded in Barrère & Leland.
- 974, col. 1, line 4. The semi-colon should be a colon.
- 997, col. 1, **bob**, v. This entry should go on p. 994, col. 2, at **bob**, v., and form sense 3.

## A GHOST WORD

At end of F, on p. 309, I list **fye-buck** (cf.—on p. 99—**buck**, n., 6: *fyebuck* should read *syebuck*) with meaning 'sixpence'. But Parker has *syebuck*, with the long *s*, which I genuinely misread, not misapprehended, as *fyebuck*; F. & H.'s error may also have arisen from poor reading and not from ignorance. For this, I have to thank that erudite 'wordman', the late Gerald Hatchman.

*1st edition, 1937*  
*2nd edition, enlarged, 1938*  
*3rd edition, much enlarged, 1949*  
*4th edition, revised, 1951*  
*Reprinted 1953, 1956*

*To the memory of*

THE LATE

ALFRED SUTRO

(OF SAN FRANCISCO)

LOVER OF LOVELY THINGS

IN ART AND LITERATURE

DEVOTEE TO KNOWLEDGE

AND

TRUE FRIEND

# CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	vii
NOTES TO 2ND AND 3RD EDITIONS . . . . .	x
ABBREVIATIONS AND SIGNS . . . . .	xi
A NOTE ON ARRANGEMENT . . . . .	xiii
CORRIGENDA . . . . .	xiv
<b>A DICTIONARY OF SLANG AND UNCONVENTIONAL ENGLISH . . . . .</b>	<b>1-974</b>
<b>ADDENDA . . . . .</b>	<b>975-1230</b>

# A DICTIONARY OF SLANG AND UNCONVENTIONAL ENGLISH

A

A

ABIGAIL

**a, 'a.** Sol. and dial. for *has, have* (e.g. "I would a done it, if . . ."): C. 18-20; earlier S.E. By way of *ha'*, which in C. 15-17 was S.E., coll. or dial. thereafter.—2. Of: esp. in *kinda, sorta*: see **kinder, sorter**.—3. An: sol. mostly London (—1887). Baumann.—4. Superfluous, therefore catachrestic, of C. 19-20, as in 'No more signal a defeat was ever inflicted'. Fowler.—5. 'a-, an-, not or without, should be prefixed only to Greek stems . . . [amoral], being literary is inexcusable, and non-moral should be used instead,' Fowler.—6. Superfluous or, rather, intrusive in vv.: sol.: C. 19-20. 'He's the party as had a done it.' Cf. *of, v.* Esp. with present pop.: see, e.g., quotation at *a-doing of*.

**A.A. of the G.G. (or Gee-Gee).** The Institute of the Horse and Pony Club, which was founded in 1930. Sir Frederick Hobday, in *The Saturday Review*, May 19, 1934. Lit., the Automobile Association of the Gee-Gee (or horse).

**A.B.** An able-bodied seaman (—1875); coll. by 1900. *Chambers's Journal*, No. 627, 1875.

**A.B.C.** An Aerated Bread Company's tea-shop: from ca. 1880; coll. by 1914.—2. At Christ's Hospital, C. 19, ale, bread and cheese on 'going-home night'.

**A B C, (as) easy as.** Extremely easy or simple to do: C. 19-20. Adumbrated in 1595 by Shakespeare's 'then comes answer like an Absey booke'. Always coll.

**a-cockbill.** Free; dangling free; nautical coll. (—1887). Baumann; Bowen.

**a-crash of, go.** To assault (a person): low coll. (—1923). Manchon.

**A.D.** A drink: male dancers' coll. (—1909) inscribed on dance-programmes; ob. Ware.

**a-doing of.** Doing: sol.: mid-C. 19-20. (D. Sayers, 1933, 'I arst you wot you was a-doin' of.')

**a.f.** Having met with (come across) a 'flat', who has, to the speaker's advantage, laid his bets all wrong: the turf (—1823); † by 1870. 'Jon Bee.'

**A from a windmill or the gable-end, not to know.** To be very ignorant, or illiterate: coll.: resp. C. 15, C. 19-20 (ob.). See also **B from** . . .

**A1.** Excellent, first-class: first of ships (Lloyd's Register); then of persons and things, Dickens, 1837. U.S. form: *A No. 1*. Variants, *A1 copper-bottomed* (Charles Hindley, 1876), now ob.; *A1 at Lloyd's* (from ca. 1850); *first-class, letter A, No. 1* (—1860). H., 2nd ed.—2. A commander of 900 men: Fenian coll. > j.: ca. 1865-90. Erroneously *No. 1*. (A lower officer was known as *B*.)

**\*Aaron,** in c., a cadger; *the Aaron*, a captain of thieves. † C. 17-19. Cf. *abandannad*, a pickpocket.

**abaa.** A non-unionist; hence, adj.: silly. Proletarian (—1903). F. & H., revised.

D.U.E.

**\*abaddon.** A thief turned informer: c.: late C. 19-20; ob. † a pun on a *bad 'un* and the angel *Abaddon*.

**abaht.** Cockney for *about*: sol.: C. 19 (? earlier)—20. See **-ah-**.

**\*abandannad.** A thief specializing in *bandanna* handkerchiefs: c. (—1864). H., 3rd ed. There is perhaps a pun on *abandoned*—2. Hence, any petty thief: c.: late C. 19-20; virtually †.

**abandoned habits.** The riding dresses of demi-mondaines in Hyde Park: ca. 1870-1900.

**abber.** At Harrow School, an abstract or an absit: from 1890's. Oxford **-er**.

**abbess** (1782 +), *Lady Abbess* (—1755). The keeper of a brothel: late C. 18-19. A procuress: C. 19. Ex Fr. *abbesse*, a female brothel-keeper. Cf. *abbot* and see esp. F. & H. *Peter Pindar*, John Wolcot (d. 1819):

So an old abbess, for the rattling rakes,  
A tempting dish of human nature makes,  
And dresses up a luscious maid.

**abbey lubber.** A lazy monk: ca. 1538-1750: coll. >, by 1600, S.E.—2. A lazy, thriftless person: nautical, ca. 1750-1900.

**abbot.** The husband, or the preferred male, of a brothel-keeper (see *abbess*): C. 19. Cf. the old S.E. terms, *abbot of misrule*, *abbot of unreason*, a leader in a disorderly festivity.

**Abbott's Priory.** The King's Bench Prison: ca. 1820-80; † ex Sir Charles Abbott, Lord Chief Justice, 1813. Likewise, *Abbott's Park*, the rules thereof. 'Jon Bee.'

**abdominal.** An abdominal case: medical coll.: C. 20. (A. P. Herbert, *Holy Deadlock*, 1934.)

**abdominal crash.** An aeroplane smash; a heavy fall: Air Force: from 1916. F. C. Gibbons. On *gutser*.

**Abdul.** A Turkish soldier; collectively, the Turks: military coll.: from 1915. B. & P. Ex frequency of Abdul as a Turkish name.

**abear.** Except in dial., it is, in C. 19-20, a sol. or perhaps only a low coll. for 'tolerate', 'endure', after being S.E. Ex O.E. sense, to carry.

**abel-w(h)ackets.** See **able-w(h)ackets**.

**Aberdeen cutlet.** A dried haddock: from ca. 1870. By F. & H. denoted familiar, but definitely s. Ob. Cf. *Billinggate pheasant* and *Yarmouth capon*.

**aberuncator.** Incorrect for *averruncator* (instrument for lopping): from ca. 1860. O.E.D.

**abide.** To abide (pay, atone for): catachrestic: ca. 1585-1720. O.E.D. By confusion of form and sense. Cf. the C. 15 *abite* for *abye*.

**Abigail.** A lady's-maid: from ca. 1616, though not recorded fig. till 47 years later: coll. >, by 1800, S.E. Ex the Bible. In Beaumont &

Fletcher, Fielding, Smollett; coll. from ca. 1700. Now outmoded literary.

[**-able, -ible**: when to use which. See Fowler.]

**able-w(h)ackets**, wrongly *abel-w(h)ackets*. A nautical card-game in which every lost point—or game—entails a whack with a knotted handkerchief (Grose, Smyth): coll.: from ca. 1780; † by 1883: witness Clark Russell's nautical dictionary.

**Abney Park, to have gone to**. To be dead: proletarian London (—1909); very ob. Ware. Ex Abney Park Cemetery.

**abnoxious**. Incorrect for *obnoxious*: mid C. 17 (?–18). O.E.D.

**abo, Abo**. An aborigine: Australian: late C. 19–20, orig. journalistic. Jice Doone. Cf. *aboliar*, q.v.

**aboard of, fall**. To meet (a person): nautical coll. (—1887). Baumann.

**aboliar** (or **A-**); properly **abo-liar**. A regular writer on Aborigine lore or of Aborigine stories: s. (from ca. 1910) >, by 1925 coll. and by 1936 virtually j. It is a coinage of *The Sydney Bulletin*, which, by the way, also coined *Billjim* and *Maoriland*. Cognate, and from the same mint, is *aboriginality*, a (preferably *original*) contribution to Aborigine lore: Australian coll.: C. 20. Gen. in pl., in which shape it heads a column in *The Bulletin*.

**abominable**. A late C. 19–20 sol., or jocular coll., for *abdominal*; esp. in *abominable pains*.—2. Very unpleasant: coll., from ca. 1860: the same with the adv. (**-bly**). Cf. the S.E. senses and:

**abominate**. To dislike 'intensely', i.e. very much: from ca. 1875. Coll.

**aboriginality**. See *aboliar*.

**about, the other way**. (Fig.) precisely the contrary: gen. in reference to a statement just made. Coll., from ca. 1860.

**about one, have something**. 'To show character or ability'; to be, in some undefined or intangible way, charming or, perhaps because of some mystery, fascinating: coll. (and dial.): from ca. 1890 (? earlier). E.D.D. (Sup.), 'That fellow has something about him, I must admit.' Cf. the analogous use of *there's something to* (a person or a thing).

**about proper**. An illiterate variant of *proper*, adv.: q.v.

**about right**. Correct; adequate. Frank Smedley, 1850. Coll.; post-G.W. prefers *about it*.

[**about that**, approximately that, is S.E. verging on coll.]

**about the size of it**. Approximately (right): from ca. 1870, coll.; ? orig. U.S.

**About Turn**. Hébuterne, a village in France: Western-Front military: G.W. F. & Gibbons.

**above board**. Openly; without artifice or dishonesty. Coll. verging on, and occ. achieving, S.E. Ex position of hands in card-playing for money. Earliest record, 1608 (Apperson).

**above oneself**. Too ambitious or confident, not by nature but momentarily: C. 20.

**above par**. In excellent health, spirits, money in hand, mild drunkenness. All from ca. 1870, ex stocks and shares at a premium. Cf. *below par*.

**abrac; Abrac**. Learning: ca. 1820–50. 'Jon Bee', 1823. Corruption of *Arabic* or abbr. of *abracadabra*.

**Abraham**. 'A clothier's shop of the lowest description': chiefly East End of London and ex the Jewish name; ca. 1870–1920.—2. The penis: low: late C. 19–20; ob. Whence *Abraham's bosom*, the female pudend.

**Abra(ha)m, sham**. See *Abra(ha)m-sham*.

**\*Abra(ha)m-cove** or **-man**. A pseudo-madman seeking alms; a genuine lunatic allowed on certain days to leave Bethlehem Hospital (whence *bedlam beggar*) to beg. The term flourished most ca. 1550–1700, *A. cove* being, however, unrecorded in C. 16; this sense > archaic only ca. 1830; ex Luke xvii (Lazarus); described by Awdelay, Harman, Shakespeare, Massinger, B.E., Grose.—2. Also, in late C. 18–19, a mendicant pretending to be an old naval rating cast on the streets. Cf. *abram*, q.v.—3. (Only *Abram man*.) A thief of pocket-books: c. (—1823); † by 1870. 'Jon Bee.'

**Abra(ha)m-sham**. A feigned illness or destitution: C. 19. Ex *sham Abra(ha)m*, to pretend sickness (—1759), in C. 19 mainly nautical and often *do Abra(ha)m*; also—see **Abraham Newland**—to forge banknotes, † by 1840.

**\*Abraham Grains** (or **g-**). A publican brewing his own beer: c.: late C. 19–20.

**Abraham Newland**. A banknote, ex the Bank of England's chief cashier of 1778–1807: ca. 1780–1830; Scott uses it in 1829. H., 2nd ed. (1860), records the c.p. (? orig. the words of a song), *sham Abraham you may, but you mustn't sham Abraham Newland*. Cf. a *bradbury*, q.v.

**abraham** (or **abram**) **work**. Any sham or swindle, esp. if commercial: mid-C. 19–20; ob. As adj. *abra(ha)m* = spurious, as in c. *abraham suit*, false pretences or representations: C. 19.

**Abrahamer**. A vagrant: low (—1823); † by 1900. 'Jon Bee', who defines *Abrahamers* as 'a lot, or receptacle full of beggars, half naked, ragged, and dirty': an ambiguous set of words.

**Abraham's balsam**. Death by hanging: C. 18 low. Punning S.E. *Abraham's balm* (tree).

**Abraham's willing**. A shilling: rhyming s. (—1859). H., 1st ed.

**abram**. A malingerer: C. 19–20 nautical; ob.—2. As adj., c.: mad, C. 16–17; naked, C. 17–18, this latter developing ex *auburn* corrupted, for (as in Shakespeare) *abra(ha)m*, later *abram-coloured*, = auburn, hence fair. Cf. the *abrannoi* (naked) of Hungarian Gypsy (V. Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, 1922).—3. For *sham Abram*, see *Abra(ha)m-sham*.

**\*abram cove**. 'A Naked or poor Man, also a lusty strong Rogue', B.E.; the latter being of the 17th Order of the Canting Crew: c.: C. 17—early 19. Cf. *abram*, 2.

**\*Abram man**. See *Abraham-man*.—**Abram-sham**. See *Abraham-sham*.—**abram work**. See *abraham work*.

**abridgements**. Knee-breeches. ? Nonce word: Bulwer Lytton's play, *Money*, 1840.

**abroad**. In error, wide of the mark (Dickens); earlier (Pierce Egan, 1821), *all abroad*, with additional sense of 'confused'; *all abroad*, in the former sense, now ob. From ca. 1860; both coll.—2. Also, (of convicts) transported: ca. 1830–90.—3. At Winchester College, C. 19, (*come*) *abroad* meant to return to work after being ill.

**abroaded**. Living on the Continent as a defaulter from England: Society, 1860–90.—2. Sent to a penal settlement whether at home or in the Colonies: police, ca. 1840–80. Cf. *abroad*.—3. In c., imprisoned anywhere: ca. 1870–1920.

**abs**. At Winchester College in C. 19, now ob.: absent; to take away; to depart (quickly). Ca. 1840, *abs a tolly*, to put out a candle; late C. 19–20, to extinguish a candle demands *the*

'notion' *dump* it. To have one's wind *absed*, is to get a 'breather' or 'winder'.

\***abscotchalater**. See **absquatulate**.

[**absence** in its Eton sense (a roll-call) is now *j.*, but it may orig. have been *s.*: see esp. 'Eton slang', § 1.]

**absent without leave**. (Of one) having absconded: from ca. 1860.—2. In *c.*, escaped from prison: *id.*

**absence without leave, give (one)**. To discharge (one) suddenly from employment: from ca. 1820; *ob.* 'Jon Bee.'

**absent-minded beggar**. A soldier: semi-jocular *coll.*: 1899–1902. Ex Kipling's poem.

**absentee**. A convict: semi-euphemistic *coll.*: ca. 1810–60.

**abso-bloody-lutely**. The most frequent of the *bloody* interpolations, as *not f\*\*king likely* is of the *f\*\*king* interpolations: C. 20.

**absolute, on the**. On the granting of the decree **absolute**: divorce-agency *coll.*: C. 20. (A. P. Herbert, *Holy Deadlock*, 1934).

**absolutely**! Certainly! *Coll.* intensification of 'yes': C. 20.

**absolutely true**. Utterly false: Society: ca. 1880. Ware. Ex title of book.

**absorb**. To drink (liquor): *v.t.* and *i.*: C. 20, as in 'He absorbs a lot, you know!'

**absquatulate**. To depart, *gen.* hastily or in disgrace. Anglicized ca. 1860, *ob.* by 1900; orig. U.S. (1837). Thornton; H., 1st ed. An artificial word: perhaps on *abscond* and *squat*, with a *L.* ending. Hence *absquatulating*, *-ize*, *-ation*, *-ator*, not very *gen.*; and \**abscotchalater*, one in hiding from the police.—2. *V.t.*, rare: to cause to do so: 1844 (O.E.D.).

**abstropelous**. A C. 18–mid-19 variant of *abstropelous*.

**absurd** is *coll.* in its loose, Society usage: from ca. 1920. D. Mackail, *Greenery Street*, 1925, 'Besides, *caveat emptor* and—generally speaking—don't be absurd.'

**abthain, abthane**. A superior thane: catachrestic: C. 16–20. (Correctly, an abbey.) O.E.D.

**Abyssinian medal**. A button showing in the fly: military: ca. 1896–1914. Ware. Ex the Abyssinian War (1893–6). Cf. *Star of the East*.

**Ac, the**. The Royal Academy: artists': from ca. 1870; slightly *ob.* Ware.

**academic nudity**. 'Appearance in public without cap or gown', Ware: Oxford University (— 1909); † by 1921.

**academician**. A harlot: ca. 1760–1820. Ex *academy*, a brothel: *c.* of late C. 17–18. B.E., Grose. In C. 19, *academy* = a thieves' school: cf. Fagan in *Oliver Twist*. But in late C. 19–20, *academy* is also a hard-labour prison and (— 1823) its inmates are *academicians*. Bee.

**academics**. (University) cap and gown: from ca. 1820; *ob.* *Coll.* rather than *s.*; the *j.* would be *academicals*.

**Academy**. 'A graduate of the old Royal Naval Academy at Portsmouth': nautical *coll.*: from ca. 1870; *ob.* Bowen.

\***Academy**. See **academician**.—2. (**Academy**.) Abbr. *Academy-figure*, a 'half-life' drawing from the nude: artists', C. 20.—3. A billiard-room: ca. 1885–1910. Ware, 'Imported from Paris'.

**Academy, the**. Platonism and Platonists: from the 1630's: academic *s.* >, in G. 18 university *coll.* >, by 1830, philosophic *j.* The other four of the chief schools of Greek philosophy are *The Garden*

(Epicureanism), *The Lyceum* (Aristotelianism), *The Porch* (Stoicism), and *The Iub* (Cynicism): same period and changes of status. Fowler.

**acater**. A ship chandler: nautical *coll.* C. 19–20; *ob.* Bowen. A survival of † S.E. *acatur*, a purveyor: ex Fr. *acheteur*, a buyer.

**acause**. A *sol.* for *because*; now rare except in *dial.*: C. 18–20.

**accedence, accidence**. Occ. confused: C. 16–20. O.E.D.

**access**. A C. 19–20 *sol.* for *excess*. Pronunciation often *ax-sess*.

**accessary, -ory**. Often confused: C. 19–20. Fowler.

**accident**. An untimely, or accidental, call of nature: *coll.*: 1899. O.E.D.

**accident-maker**. A report dealing with accidents and disasters: London journalists' (— 1887): † by 1920. Baumann.

**accidentally on purpose**. With purpose veiled: *c.p.*: C. 20.

**accidently**. Accidentally: *sol.*: late C. 19–20.

**accommodation house**. A brothel; a disorderly house; from ca. 1820, now *ob.* *Coll.* 'Jon Bee.'

**according, adv.** A C. 20 *sol.* (earlier, S.E.) for *accordingly*. Esp. in *and the rest according*. Cf.:

**according, that's**. A *coll.* abbr. of the cautious *that's according to*, i.e. dependent on, *the circumstances*. (Not in the sense, in accordance *with*.)

**according to Cocker**. Properly, correctly. From ca. 1760, ex Edward Cocker (d. 1675). The U.S. phrase (partly acclimatized in England by 1909: Ware) is *according to Gunter*, a famous mathematician: the C. 19 nautical, *according to John Norie*, the editor of a much-consulted Navigator's Manual.

**account, go on the**. To turn pirate, or buccaneer (— 1812). *Coll.*, †. Scott.

**account for**. To kill: from ca. 1840 (Thackeray, 1842). Sporting *coll.* >, by 1890, S.E.

**accounts, cast up one's**. To vomit: C. 17–19. In C. 20, rare; by 1930, †. Dekker; Grose. A nautical variant, C. 19–20: *audit one's accounts at the court of Neptune*.—2. In *c.*, to turn King's evidence: mid-C. 19–20; *ob.*

**accrue chocolate**. 'To make oneself popular with the officers': naval: C. 20; *ob.* Bowen.

**accumulator**. (Racing) a better carrying forward a win to the next event: from ca. 1870.

**accur(re), occur**. Often confused: mid-C. 16–18. O.E.D. (Properly, *accur* = to meet.)

**ace**. A variant of *ace of spades*, 1.—2. A showy airman: Air Force *coll.*, 1918; *ob.* F. & Gibbons. Ex the lit. S.E. sense, a crack airman.

**ace of spades**. A widow: C. 19.—2. The female pudend: low: mid-C. 19–20. F. & H., 'Hence, to play one's ace and take the Jack (q.v.) = to receive a man'.—3. A widow: low (— 1811); † by 1890. *Lex. Bal.*—4. A black-haired woman: proletarian (— 1903). F. & H., revised ed.

**ace of, within an**. Almost: C. 18–20: *coll.* >, by 1800, S.E. 'Facetious' Tom Brown, 1704. Orig. *ambs.* or *ames-ace*.

**achage**. Jocularly *coll.*: an aching state: C. 20. After *breakage* (S.O.D.).

**achronical, -ycal**, and derivative *adv.* Incorrect for *acronyc(h)al, -ly*: C. 17–20. O.E.D.

**acid, come the**. To exaggerate: exaggerate one's authority; make oneself unpleasant; endeavour to shift one's duty on to another: *military*: from ca. 1910. F. & Gibbons.



**Acid Drop, the.** Mr. Justice Avory: legal nickname: C. 20. (*The Saturday Review*, March 9, 1935.)

**acid on, put the.** To ask for a loan: Australia, New Zealand: C. 20. Jice Doone. Punning S.E. *acid test*.

**ack!** No!, as the refusal of a request: Christ's Hospital, C. 19. Cf. *Romany ac!*, stuff!

**Ack; Beer; Don.**—A, B, D Company: military coll.: from 1914. Ex *signalese*. Cf.:

**ack emma.** A.m.: military: from 1915. Ex *signalese* for these two letters.

**ack over tock.** See **arse over turkey**.

**'ackin' corf.** A hacking cough: 'pseudo-vulgarly in jest' (— 1927); i.e. coll. when jocular, illiterate when serious. Collinson.

**\*ackman, c.,** is a fresh-water thief: mid-C. 18–19. Corruption of *arkman*, q.v. F. & H. adduces also *ack-pirate* and *ack-riff*.

**acknowledge the corn,** v.i. Admit, acknowledge (Sala, 1883); ob. Ex U.S. (— 1840), to admit failure or outwitting. See esp. Thornton.

**\*acorn, a horse foaled by an.** The gallows; gen. as *ride a horse* . . ., to be hanged: c.: late C. 17–mid-19. Motteux, Ainsworth. Cf. *three-legged* or *wooden mare*, qq.v.

**acquaintance, scrape (an).** To make acquaintance. Coll.: Farquhar, 1698, 'no scraping acquaintance, for Heaven's sake'.

**acquire.** To steal: coll.: C. 20. Not a euphemism, for it is used jocularly.—2. Occ. confused with (*en-* or) *inquire* and *require*: C. 17–20. O.E.D.

**acre, knave's.** A mid-C. 16–early 17 variant of *weeping cross*, q.v. See also *beggar's bush* for a very pertinent quotation.

**Acres, Bob Acres.** A coward, esp. if boastful. Ex a character in Sheridan's *Rivals*, 1775. Coll., †.

**acrobat.** A drinking-glass: music-hall (— 1903). F. & H., revised. Punning *tumbler*.

**acromatic.** Incorrect for *achromatic* (late C. 18–20) and *acroamatic* (C. 17–20). O.E.D.

**across, come.** To meet with accidentally: mid-C. 19–20: coll., > S.E., not literary, in C. 20.—2. *come across (with it)!* Confess!, speak out!; hand it over!: post-G.W. Ex U.S.. See also *come across*, 1.

**across, get, v.t.** Irritate or offend (a person): C. 20; coll.

**across, put it.** See **put it across**.

**acrost.** Acrost: sol., mostly London (— 1887); also dial. Baumann.

**act of parliament.** (Military) small beer perforce supplied free to a soldier: late C. 18–early 19. Grose.

**Acteon.** A cuckold: C. 17–18. B.E., Grose.—2. To cuckold: late C. 17–early 18. B.E. Coll. Ex legend of Diana and Acteon.

**acting dicky.** A temporary appointment: naval (— 1903); ob. F. & H., revised. On *acting-order*. —2. (Often *a.D.*) A man acting in the name of an enrolled solicitor: legal (— 1903). Ibid.

**acting dish.** A dish resembling an old favourite; *acting rabbit-pie* is made of beef: naval: C. 20. Bowen. Ex *acting officer*.

**acting lady.** An inferior actress: ironic theatrical coll.: 1883, *Entr'acte* (February); † by 1920. Ware. Mrs. Langtry's social-cum-theatrical success in 1882 caused many society women to try their luck on the stage; mostly with deplorable results.

**acting rabbit-pie.** See **acting dish**.

**acting the deceitful.** (Theatrical.) Acting: C. 19. Duncombe.

**acting the maggot,** vbl. n. and ppl. adj. Shirking work: (mostly Anglo-Irish) bank-clerks' (— 1935).

**active citizen.** A louse: low (— 1811); † by 1890. *Lex. Bal.* Cf. *bosom friend*.

**actor's Bible, the.** *The Era*: theatrical coll.: ca. 1860–1918. Ware. A fling at sacred matters prompted by the sensation caused by *Essays and Reviews*.

**actressy.** Characteristic of an actress; theatrical or somewhat melodramatic in manner: coll.: late C. 19–20. (Edward Shanks, *The Enchanted Village*, 1933.)

**actual, the.** Money, collectively, esp. if in cash: mid-C. 19–20. At this word, F. & H. has an admirable essayette on, and list of English and foreign synonyms for, money. In 1890 there were at least 130 English, 50 French synonyms.

**ad.** An advertisement: printers' coll.: 1854 (Dickens); in C. 20, gen. Occ. *advert*, rarely *adver*.

**ad lib.** A coll. abbr. of *ad libitum*, as much as one likes: C. 19–20.

**adad!** An expletive: coll.: ca. 1660–1770. Prob. ex *egad!*

**Adam.** A bailiff, a police sergeant: C. 16–17. Shakespeare.—2. In mid-C. 17–19 c., an accomplice: with *tiler* following, a pickpocket's assistant. Coles, 1676; B.E.; Grose.—3. A foreman: workmen's (— 1903); ob. F. & H., revised.

**Adam; adam.** (Gen. in passive.) To marry: c.: 1781, G. Parker, "What, are you and Moll adamed?" "Yes . . . and by a rum Tom Pat too"; † by 1850. Ex Adam and Eve.

**Adam and Eve.** To believe: rhyming s. (— 1914). F. & Gibbons.

**Adam and Eve on a raft.** Eggs on toast: mostly military: C. 20. Ibid. Cf.:

**Adam and Eve wrecked.** Scrambled eggs: id.: id.: Ibid.

**Adam and Eve's togs.** Nudity: proletarian London (— 1909); slightly ob. Ware. Cf. *birth-day suit*.

**Adam tiler.** See **Adam**, n., 2.

**Adam's ale.** Water. Coll. C. 17–18; jocular S.E. in C. 19–20, but now outworn. Prynn. The Scottish equivalent is *Adam's wine* (— 1859): H., 1st ed.

**adaption.** Adaptation: C. 19–20: S.E. until C. 20, when gen. considered sol.

**add.** To come to the correct or wished-for total: coll.: 1850, Dickens. O.E.D. Sup.

**added to the list.** I.e. of geldings in training; hence, castrated. Racing s. (— 1874). H., 5th ed. Orig. a euphemism.

**addel.** See **addle**.

**Adders.** Addison's Walk: Oxford University: late C. 19–20. By 'the Oxford -er'.

**addition.** Paint or rouge or powder for the face: ca. 1690–1770. Mrs. Centlivre: 'Addition is only paint, madam.' Society s.

**addle;** often spelt **addel.** Putrid drinking water: nautical: late C. 19–20. Bowen. Ex *addled*.

**addle cove.** A fool; a facile dupe: late C. 18–19. On *addle-head* or *-pate*.

**Addle (or Addled) Parliament.** The Parliament of 1614: coll. nickname. O.E.D.

**addle-plot.** "A Martin Mar-all", B.E.; a spoil-sport: coll.: late C. 17–18.

**addlings.** 'Pay accumulated on a voyage or