

**GEORGE
W. MATSELL**

**VOCABULUM;
OR THE ROGUE'S
LEXICON**

George W. Matsell

Vocabulary; or The Rogue's Lexicon

Compiled from the Most Authentic Sources

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TECHNICAL WORDS AND PHRASES, USED BY BILLIARD-PLAYERS.

BROKERS' TECHNICALITIES IN BRIEF.

A HUNDRED STRETCHES HENCE

TECHNICAL WORDS AND PHRASES IN GENERAL USE BY PUGILISTS.

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NEW BOOKS.

PREFACE.

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When a young man enters upon the business of life, he may have some indefinite idea of what he intends to follow out to the close thereof; but he soon finds himself surrounded by circumstances which control his actions and business pursuits, and lead him into channels of thought and industry that had not previously entered into his philosophy. At least I have found it to be so, and I have no doubt others have had a similar experience. To become a lexicographer, certainly never entered into my calculation, or even found a place in the castle-building of my younger days; and if a kind friend had suggested to me that I was destined to fill such a position in life, I would simply have regarded him as a fit subject for the care of the authorities. This improbable event has now taken place; and I present myself to the world as the compiler of a language used in all parts of the world, and yet understood connectedly but by few persons.

The rogue fraternity have a language peculiarly their own, which is understood and spoken by them no matter what their dialect, or the nation where they were reared. Many of their words and phrases, owing to their comprehensive meaning, have come into general use, so that a Vocabulum or Rogue's Lexicon, has become a necessity to the general reader, but more especially to those who read police intelligence.

Occupying the position of a Special Justice, and Chief of the Police of the great Metropolis of New-York, where thieves

and others of a like character from all parts of the world congregate, and realizing the necessity of possessing a positive knowledge of every thing connected with the class of individuals with whom it was my duty to deal, I was naturally led to study their peculiar language, believing that it would enable me to converse with them more at ease, and thus acquire a knowledge of their character, besides obtaining from them information that would assist me in the position I occupied, and consequently be of great service to the public. To accomplish this task was no mean undertaking, as I found that it required years of diligent labor to hunt up the various authorities, and these when found proved only partially available, as much of the language in present use was unwritten, and could only be obtained by personal study among first-class thieves who had been taught it in their youth. The difficulties surrounding it, did not deter me from following out my resolution, and by closely pursuing it, I had opened up to me a fountain of knowledge that I could not have obtained if I had not possessed a clear understanding of this peculiar dialect. Experience has since demonstrated to me that any man engaged in police business can not excel without understanding the rogues' language, in the study of which they will find this Lexicon of invaluable service.

It is not, however, to policemen alone that this book will be of service, as these cant words and phrases are being interwoven with our language and many of them are becoming recognized Anglicisms. It is not unusual to see them in the messages of presidents and governors—to hear them enunciated at the bar and from the pulpit, and thus

they have come to be acknowledged as appropriately expressive of particular ideas; so that while they are in common use among the footpads that infest the land, the *élite* of the Fifth Avenue pay homage to their worth, by frequently using them to express thoughts, that could not, otherwise, find a fitting representative. The vocabulary of the rogue is not of recent date; although it is mainly made up of arbitrary or technical words and phrases, while others are of a purely classical origin. It is a language of great antiquity, and may be dated back to the earliest days of the roving gipsy bands, that infested Europe, from whom the greater portion of it has been derived. It might more properly be termed the Romany or Gipsy language, adapted to the use of modern rogues in all parts of the world, and in which the etymologist will find words drawn from every known language. Some of these words are peculiarly national, but as a general thing the language of the rogue in New-York is the language of the rogue the world over.

Among policemen, not only in this city but in different parts of the United States, the cant language of thieves is attempted to be used; but there being no standard they are unable to do so understandingly, and each one gives to the words the corrupted sense in which he received it; thus speaking as it were, a miserable "*patois*," to the exclusion of the true "Parisian French." This departure from the true meaning of the words used is mischievous in its tendency, as it is calculated to mislead and bewilder, so that rogues might still converse in the presence of an officer, and he be ignorant of what they said. This I have endeavored to correct, and although I may not claim infallibility in these

matters, yet I believe that I have arrived at as high a degree of perfection as is now attainable.

To the readers of the *National Police Gazette*, the oldest and most reliable criminal journal published in the United States, this work will prove invaluable, as it will enable them to understand and fully comprehend language that the editors and correspondents are frequently compelled to use in order to convey the idea as understood by rogues in general.

GEO. W. MATSELL.

New-York, 1859.

VOCABULUM;

OR,

THE ROGUE'S LEXICON.

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ABRAHAM. To sham; to pretend sickness.

ABRAHAM COVE. A naked or poor man; a beggar in rags.

ACADEMY. A penitentiary, or prison for minor offenses.

ACCOUNTS. To cast accounts; to vomit.

ACE OF SPADES. A widow.

ACKRUFFS. River-thieves; river-pirates.

ACORN. A gallows.

ACTEON. A cuckold.

ACTIVE CITIZEN. A louse.

ADAM. An accomplice; a pal.

ADAM-TILER. A fellow whose business it is to receive the plunder from the "File"—the one who picked the pocket—and get away with it.

ADDLE-COVE. A foolish man.

AGOG. Anxious; impatient; all-agog.

AGOGARE. Anxious; eager; impatient; be quick.

AIR AND EXERCISE. To work in the stone quarry at Blackwell's Island or at Sing Sing.

ALAMORT. Confounded; struck dumb; unable to say or do any thing.

ALBERT. A chain.

ALBONIZED. Whitened.

ALLS. The five alls. First, the monarch's motto, "I govern all." Second, the bishop's motto, "I pray for all." Third, the lawyer's motto, "I plead for all." Fourth, the soldier's motto, "I fight for all." Fifth, the farmer's motto, "I pay for all."

ALTEMAL. All in a heap, without items; the sum total.

ALTITUDES. A state of drunkenness; being high.

AMBIDEXTER. One who befriends both sides; a lawyer who takes fees from both parties in a suit.

AMERACE. Very near; don't go far; be within call.

AMPUTATE YOUR MAHOGANY or TIMBER. Be off quick; away with you.

AMUSE. To amuse; to invent plausible stories and thereby rob or cheat unsuspecting persons.

AMUSERS. Fellows who carry snuff or pepper in their pockets, which they throw into a person's eyes and then run away; the accomplice rushing up to the victim, pretending to assist, robs him while suffering with pain.

ANGLERS. Small thieves who place a hook on the end of a stick, and therewith steal from store-windows, doors, etc. It also applies to fencemen; putters up, etc.

ANKLE. "A sprained ankle;" the mother of a child born out of wedlock.

ANODYNE. Death; to anodyne, to kill. "Ahr say, Bill, vy don't yer hopen that jug and draw the cole?" "Vy, my cove, aren't you avare as how a bloke snoses hin it?" "Vell, vot hof it, aren't yer habel to put him to hanodyne?"

ANOINTED. Flogged.

APPLES AND PEARS. Stairs.

AQUA. Water.

ARCH-COVES. Chief of the gang or mob; headmen; governors; presidents.

ARCH-DUKE. A funny fellow.

ARCH-GONNOFF. The chief of a gang of thieves.

ARD. Hot.

ARK. A ship; a boat; a vessel.

ARTFUL DODGERS. Lodgers; fellows who dare not sleep twice in the same place for fear of arrest.

ARTICLE. Man. "You're a pretty article." A term of contempt.

ARTICLES. A suit of clothes.

ARTIST. An adroit rogue.

ASSAY. Go on; commence; try it.

ATTLEBOROUGH. Not genuine; made to imitate. At the town of Attleborough jewelry is manufactured from the baser metals, or so alloyed as to deceive those who are not good judges of the genuine article.

AUTUM. A church.

AUTUM-BAWLER. A parson.

AUTUM-CAACKLER. A married woman.

AUTUM-COVE. A married man.

AUTUM-DIVERS. Pickpockets who practise in churches.

AUTUM-JET. A parson.

AUTUMED. Married.

AWAKE. To know; to let know.

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BABY PAPS. Caps.

BACONNING. A fat round face; a full pale face.

BADGER. A panel thief; a fellow who robs a man's pocket after he has been enticed into bed with a woman; to torment.

BAG OF NAILS. Every thing in confusion.

BAGGED. Imprisoned.

BALL. Prison allowance.

BALLUM-RANCUM. A ball where all the dancers are thieves and prostitutes.

BALSAM. Money.

BAM. A lie; to bamboozle; humbug.

BANDERO. A widow's weeds.

BANDOG. A civil officer.

BANGUP. The best; very fine; height of the fashion.

BAPTIZED. Liquor that has been watered.

BARDY. A sixpence.

BARKER. One who patrols the streets for customers in front of his employer's shop; vide Chatham street.

BARKING. Shooting.

BARKING-IRONS. Pistols.

BARNACLES. A good booty; a pair of spectacles; hand-cuffs.

BARREL FEVER. Delirium tremens.

BASTER. A house-thief.

BAT. A prostitute who walks the streets only at night.

BAZAAR. A counter.

BEAK. A magistrate; a judge.

BEAKQUERE. A sharp, strict magistrate who is attentive to his duty.

BEANS. Five-dollar gold-pieces.

BEAT. Get the best of him; "Beat the flat;" rob the man.

BEATER-CASES. }

BEATERS. } Boots.

BEAU-TRAPS. Well-dressed sharpers; fortune-hunters.

BELCHER TIE. A flashy neckerchief.

BEN. A vest.

BENDER. A spree; a drunken frolic.

BENE. Good; first rate.

BENE-BOUSE. Good drink.

BENE-COVE. A good man.

BENE-CULL. A good fellow.

BENE-DARKMAN. Good night.

BENEN-COVE. A better man.

BENFLAKE. A cheap beef-steak.

BENISON. A blessing.

BENJAMIN. A coat.

BENS. Fools.

BESS. A pick of a very simple construction.

BETSEY. *See Bess.*

BETTING HIS EYES. A term used by gamblers when a "sucker" looks on at the game, but does not bet.

BETTY. A picklock.

BEVER. An afternoon lunch.

BIENLY. Excellently, "She coaxed so bienly."

BIG THING. A rich booty.

BILBOA. A pointed instrument.

BILK. To cheat.

BILL OF SALE. A widow's weeds.

BILLY. A piece of whalebone or rawhide about fourteen inches long, with an oval-shaped lump of lead at each end, one larger than the other, the whole being covered with buckskin or india-rubber.

BILLY BUTTER. Mutton.

BILLY NOODLE. A soft fellow that believes the girls are all in love with him.

BINGAVAST. Get you gone, "Bing we to New-York;" go we to New-York.

BINGO. Liquor.

BINGO-BOY. A drunken man.

BINGO-MORT. A drunken woman.

BIRDLIME. Time. Time arrests and reveals all things.

BIRTHDAY SUIT. Stark naked.

BIT. Out-witted, "The cove was bit;" "The cove has bit the flat, and pinched his cole," outwitted and robbed him.

BIT. Done; sentenced; convicted.

BITE. To steal; to rob.

BLACK ACT. Picking locks.

BLACK COVE-DUBBER. A turn-key; a prison keeper.

BLACK FRIARS. Look out.

BLACK OINTMENT. Raw meat.

BLACK SPY. The devil.

BLACK-BOX. A lawyer.

BLACKLEG. A gambler.

BLARNEY. A picklock.

BLEAK. Handsome; "The Moll is bleak," the girl is handsome.

BLEAK-MORT. A pretty girl.

BLEATING RIG. Sheep-stealing.

BLEED. To compel a person to give money under threat of exposure.

BLINK. Not to see when one may. "The copper blinks, and won't drop to me," i. e. the officer pretends not to see me; the officer looks another way. To go to sleep.

BLOCK-HOUSE. A prison.

BLOKE. A man.

BLOSS. Woman; mistress; girl.

BLOTTED. Written.

BLOW. To inform.

BLOW A CLOUD. Smoke a segar or pipe.

BLOWEN. The mistress of a thief. "The blowen kidded the bloke into a panel crib, and shook him of his honey and

thimble," i. e. the girl enticed the man into a thieving-house, and robbed him of his watch and money.

BLUDGEONER. A fellow who passes off some well-dressed woman as his wife. She goes out in search of a gallant, and entices her victim into some unfrequented place. The bludgeoner waits outside until she gives him a signal that the man is robbed, when he rushes in with a knife, pistol, or club, and accuses the man with having seduced his wife. The poor fool gets away as fast as possible, and does not know that he is robbed.

BLUDGET. A female thief who decoys her victims into alley-ways, or other dark places, for the purpose of robbing them.

BLUE-BILLY. A peculiar handkerchief.

BLUE-PIGEON-FLYING. Stealing lead off the tops of houses.

BLUE-PLUM. A bullet; "Surfeit the bloke with blue-plum," shoot him.

BLUE-RUIN. Bad gin.

BLUFF. To bluster; look big.

BLUFFER. The landlord of a hotel.

BLUNDERBUSS. An ignorant, blustering fellow.

BLUNT. Money.

BOARDING-HOUSE. City prison; the Tombs.

BOARDING-SCHOOL. Penitentiary.

BOAT. "To boat with another;" to go in with him; to be his partner in the same boat—in the same scrape.

BOATED. Transported; gone to sea.

BOB. The fellow that carries off the plunder; a shop-lifter; a cover or staller.

BOB MY PAL. My girl.

BOB-CULL. A good fellow.

BOBBIE. A policeman.

BODY-COVER. A coat.

BOGUS. Bad coin; false.

BOKE. The nose.

BOLT. Run away.

BONE. To take; to steal; to ask him for it.

BONEBOX. The mouth.

BONED. Arrested; taken; carried off.

BONESETTER. A hard-riding horse.

BONNET. Hat. "Bonnet him," knock his hat down over his eyes.

BONNETTER. One who entices another to play; or the fellow who takes the "flat" in hand after the "roper in" has introduced him to the house.

BOOBY-HATCH. Station-house; watch-house.

BOODLE. A quantity of bad money.

BOODLE-CARRIER. The man who carries the bulk of the counterfeit money that is to be passed. The person who passes, or shoves it, as it is called, having but one "piece" at a time. The fellow with the boodle keeps close in the wake of the shover, to receive the good money, and supply him with the counterfeit, as occasion requires.

BOOKED. Arrested.

BOOLY-DOG. An officer; a policeman.

BOOSING-KEN. A drinking-shop.

BOOTH. A place in which thieves congregate.

BOOZE. Intoxicating drink.

BORDELLO. A house of ill-fame.